

MALE

THE 1001 LIVES
OF NOVARRO
THE CONMAN

25c

FEB.

SPECIAL BOOK BONUS:

**CALL GIRL
BAIT**

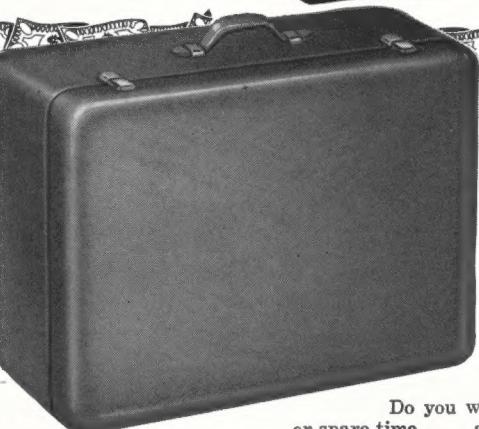
(SHE WAS LOADED—
LIKE THE GUN IN HIS POCKET)

**BLOOD BATH
OF THE 17th.**



MK

Men! Send for This Money-Making Outfit **FREE!**



Add to Your Profits with Tailored Suits for Ladies!



You can add many dollars to your earnings by taking orders for our beautifully-styled, fine quality made-to-measure suits and skirts for women. Many times husbands sell suits to men, their wives sell suits and skirts to women . . . and the profits roll in! You can too! Outfit contains styles, prices, and simple instructions.

YOUR OWN SUITS WITHOUT 1c COST!

Our plan makes it easy for you to get your own personal suits, topcoats, and overcoats without paying 1¢—in addition to your big cash earnings. Think of it! Not only do we start you on the road to making big money, but we also make it easy for you to get your own clothes without paying one penny. No wonder thousands of men write enthusiastic letters of thanks.

JUST MAIL COUPON You don't invest a penny of your money now or any time. You don't pay money for samples, for outfits, or for your own suit under our remarkable plan. So do as other men have done—mail the coupon now. Don't send a penny. Just send us the coupon.

See How Easy It Is to Make
UP TO \$30⁰⁰
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Do you want to make more money in full or spare time . . . as much as \$30.00 in a day? Then mail the coupon below for this BIG OUTFIT, sent you FREE, containing more than 100 fine quality fabrics, sensational values in made-to-measure suits, topcoats, and overcoats. Take orders from friends, neighbors, fellow-workers. Every man prefers better-fitting, better-looking made-to-measure clothes, and when you show the many beautiful, high quality fabrics—mention the low prices for made-to-measure fit and style—and show our guarantee of satisfaction, you take orders right and left. You collect a big cash profit in advance on every order, and build up fine permanent income for yourself in spare or full time.

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500 S. Throop St. Chicago 7, Ill.

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500 S. Throop St., Chicago 7, Ill.

Dear Sir: I WANT MONEY AND I WANT A SUIT TO WEAR AND SHOW, without paying 1c for it. Rush Valuable Suit Coupon and Sample Kit with actual fabrics ABSOLUTELY FREE.

Name Age

Address

City State

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The proven rule of "learn more to earn more" took M.E.F. (name on request) from a position of truck driver to that of an accounting executive in sixteen months. Listen to what M.E.F. says:

"I was driving a truck—working long hours and not making much money. I had a burning desire to better myself in life, and decided to enroll with LaSalle. I went along driving my truck days and studying nights and got my first break after completing 35 assignments. I took a cost accounting position. Within one month after starting full-time, I received my first raise, thereafter followed more. One of the greatest thrills of my life came just nineteen months after I started with LaSalle. When our firm opened up a branch office, I was assigned to take charge of the Accounting Department and my salary is doubled."

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BY THE FAMOUS LASALLE

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COUPON—NOW!

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SEND FOR FREE BOOK **←**

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A Correspondence Institution

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Please send me, free of all cost or obligation, your illustrated book, "Accountancy, the Profession That Pays."

Name _____ Age _____

Address _____

City, Zone, State _____

3





MALE

February, 1957 Vol. 7, No. 2

Cover painting by
MORT KÜNSTLER

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"My arms increased 1½", chest 2½"; fore-arm ¾".
—C. W., W. Va.



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...and I'll PROVE I Can Make You Over From Head to Foot!

IN ONLY 15 MINUTES A DAY

YES, it's yours for the asking—the kind of body YOU want! Just tell me WHERE you need it—and I'll add SOLID INCHES of powerful new muscle—make your entire body over into the kind of power house that women admire and men respect.

Do you want broader shoulders—pounds melted off your waist and hips—more powerful arms—handsome legs—a mid-section with solid-as-steel muscle? Just check what you want right in the coupon below. I'LL PROVE you can get it in just 15 minutes a day—right in the privacy of your own room.

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My method—"Dynamic Tension" is so easy! Spend only 15 minutes a day in your own home. From the

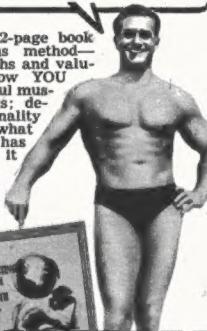
very start you'll be using my method of "Dynamic Tension" almost unconsciously every minute of the day—to BUILD MUSCLE and VITALITY. And you'll be using the method which many great athletes use for keeping in condition for boxing, wrestling, baseball, football, tennis and every other sport.

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(Check as many as you like)

More Weight—Solid—in The Right Places

Broader Chest, Shoulders

NAME.....AGE.....
(please print or write plainly)

Powerful Arms, Legs, Grip

ADDRESS.....

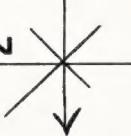
Slimmer Waist, Hips

Better Sleep, More Energy

CITY.....STATE.....

An exclusive report
for every man on:
crime . . . hunting . . . jobs . . .
new gadgets . . . women.

INSIDE FOR MEN



HITS AND MISC'S



DAILY GRIND

HITS AND MISC'S

They say the HOTTEST SHOW IN THE WORLD is the Swedish ballet. . .

NEW YORK GIRLS weigh two pounds more than the national average AND HAVE AN EXTRA INCH OF BUST TO TOTE AROUND . . . Kiss a girl's lips in INDIA—in public—and you get hauled off to prison for COMMITTING AN "Obscene act."

Now that the STRIPEASE has been introduced in France, it's tying the country in knots. Playboy Gauls won't even blink when they see a naked girl, YET THEY GO OUT OF THEIR MINDS WHEN A STRIPPER STARTS PEELING. . .

If you can't make out in LOS ANGELES, you'll never make out. THERE ARE 7800 MOTELS IN AND AROUND THERE . . . Men, it turns out, buy more perfumed products than women. . .

DAILY GRIND

ARMY BEATING THE BUSHES to get civilian photographers . . . Hep construction workers now marching their families into TRAILERS. That way they can SKIP around the country, work in a seasonal field and take a job anywhere. . .

Don't be shocked if your company rings in with FREE DANCING LESSONS FOR EXECS. Top business brass convinced that mambo and cha cha lessons help business confidence and poise. . . . IN BUCKS PER HOUR THESE DAYS, bricklayers, electricians, plumbers, carpenters are leading the pack. . . . A tip from the top PERSONNEL men: If you're over 35 and job-hunting, make sure you're not toting a spare tire around the middle. OVERWEIGHT scares off prospective bosses. . .

PICK YOUR OWN SUCCESS STORY FROM THIS PAGE

These are the true stories of people who seemed trapped in routine, low-pay shaky jobs. Handicapped by lack of proper training, they couldn't get the things they wanted out of life—more money, a job they liked, security and happiness.

They are a small sample of the thousands of men and women—young and old—who turn to I. C. S. for help. Their will-to-learn plus I. C. S. training have changed the course of their lives.

Are you discouraged with your job and pay and feel you can't improve yourself because of lack of specialized education? Well, these men and women were in the same boat. With I. C. S. training, one of these success stories could be about you.

I. C. S. is the oldest and largest correspondence school. 256 courses. Business, industrial, engineering, academic, high school. One for you. Direct, job-related. Bedrock facts and theory plus practical application. Complete lesson and answer service. No skimping. Diploma to graduates.

For Real Job Security—Get an I. C. S. Diploma!



Wins \$3000 contest—"After my I. C. S. courses I secured a new position," says Mr. Cecil Rhodes. "My income has more than doubled and I recently won a \$3000 sales contest."



From clerk to Assistant Estimator, thanks to I.C.S. "Any way you look at it," writes Mrs. Edna James, "the time and money one spends for I. C. S. Courses will be repaid a thousandfold."



"As a college graduate, I found I.C.S. very valuable." Robert Lee took the I. C. S. Course in Advertising, is now Promotion Manager for a large corporation. "I. C. S. got me started on the way up," he says.



From \$152 to \$395 a month—"I.C.S. made my engineering work more interesting," Frank Bachtik tells us. "I was a Jr. Draftsman making \$152 a month. My present income is \$395.25 a month."

3 FREE BOOKS—a 36-page pocket-size guide to advancement, a gold mine of tips on "How to Succeed." Also a big catalog outlining opportunities in your field of interest and a sample I.C.S. lesson (Math.).

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YEAR

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(Partial list of 256 courses)

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- Air Conditioning—Refrig.
- Architecture
- Architectural Interiors
- Building Contractor
- Building Estimator
- Building Maintenance
- Carpentry and Mill Work
- Heating
- Painting Contractor
- Plumbing
- Reading Arch. Blueprints

ART

- Cartooning
- Commercial Art
- Fashion Illustrating
- Magazine Illustrating
- Show Card and Sign Lettering
- Sketching and Painting

AUTOMOTIVE

- Auto-Body Rebuilding
- Auto Elec. Technician
- Auto-Engine Tune Up
- Automobile Mechanic

AVIATION

- Aeronautical Engineering Jr.
- Aircraft & Engine Mechanic
- BUSINESS
- Advertising
- Bookkeeping and Accounting
- Business Administration
- Business Correspondence
- Public Accounting
- Creative Salesmanship
- Federal Tax
- Letter-writing Improvement
- Office Management
- Professional Secretary
- Retail Business Management
- Sales Management
- Stenographic-Secretarial
- Traffic Management
- CIVIL, STRUCTURAL ENGINEERING
- Civil Engineering
- Construction Engineering
- Highway Engineering
- Reading Struct. Blueprints
- Sanitary Engineering
- Structural Engineering
- Surveying and Mapping
- DRAFTING
- Aircraft Drafting
- Architectural Drafting
- Electrical Drafting
- Mechanical Drafting
- Mine Surveying and Mapping
- Plumbing Drawing and Estimating
- Structural Drafting
- ELECTRICAL
- Electrical Engineering
- Electrical Maintenance
- Chem. Lab. Technician
- General Chemistry
- Natural-Gas Prod. & Trans.
- Petroleum Engineering
- Plastics
- Pulp and Paper Making

CHEMISTRY

- Analytical Chemistry
- Chemical Engineering
- Chem. Lab. Technician
- General Chemistry
- Natural-Gas Prod. & Trans.
- Petroleum Engineering
- Plastics
- Pulp and Paper Making

HIGH SCHOOL

- Commercial
- Good English
- High School Subjects
- Mathematics

BEFORE WHICH I have marked X (plus sample lesson):

LEADERSHIP

- Foremanship
- Industrial Supervision
- Leadership and Organization
- Personnel-Labor Relations

MACHINAL AND SHOP

- Gas-Electric Welding
- Heat Treatment Metallurgy
- Industrial Engineering
- Industrial Instrumentation
- Industrial Supervision
- Internal Combustion Engines
- Machine Design-Drafting
- Machine Shop Inspection
- Machine Shop Practice
- Mechanical Engineering
- Quality Control
- Reading Shop Blueprints
- Refrigeration
- Sheet Metal Worker
- Tool Design Toolmaking

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- Practical Radio TV Eng'ng
- Radio and TV Servicing
- Radio Operating

RAILROAD

- Air Brake Equipment
- Car Inspector
- Diesel Engineer & Fireman
- Section Foreman

STEAM AND DIESEL POWER

- Combustion Engineering
- Diesel-Elec. Diesel Eng's
- Electric Light and Power
- Stationary Fireman
- Stationary Steam Engineering

TEXTILE

- Carding and Spinning
- Cotton, Rayon, Woolen Mfg.
- Finishing and Dyeing
- Loom Fix'g Textile Des'ng
- Textile Eng'r Throwing
- Warping and Weaving

MISCELLANEOUS

- Domestic Refrigeration
- Marine Engineering
- Ocean-Navigation
- Professional Engineering
- Short Story Writing
- Telephony

Name _____

Age _____ Home Address _____

City _____

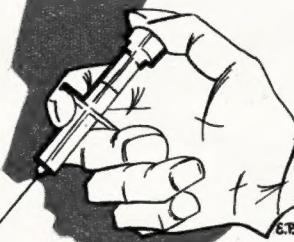
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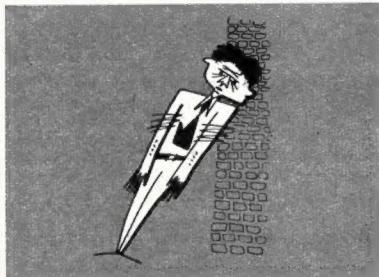
Canadian residents send coupon to International Correspondence Schools, Canadian, Ltd., Montreal, Canada. . . . Special tuition rates to members of the U. S. Armed Forces.

Medicine for Males



By Anthony Ridge

UNLUCKY STIFFS—A brand new disease is stumping the medics. It's called "stiff man syndrome" and the set of symptoms includes a strange muscle stiffness, rigidity or tightness, and muscle spasms which are sometimes so painful that they feel as if the muscles are being pulled from the bones. A sudden movement or fright



brings on the spasms. The rigidity makes the spine curve or draws it into a hump. When the patient falls because of a leg-muscle spasm, he drops like a "wax dummy." Thus far, four men have died from it. Lab tests at the Mayo Clinic have failed to find any cause and every treatment tried has proved to be of little help.

R

ARSENIC MENACE—The only ingredient of tobacco smoke that is known to be a possible cause of cancer in humans is arsenic. In the past three decades, the average arsenic content of American cigarettes has increased three-fold while the death rate from lung cancer in men has mounted 600 per cent. Reason for the boost in arsenic content of your tobacco is that the soil is contaminated with arsenical insecticides and it's almost impossible to purify the soil.

R

IT'S NOT OVERWORK—Men very often blame "overwork" for their physical and mental ills. In an interesting study of 90 men with "overwork" illnesses, an Omaha doctor has come up with revealing findings. The symptoms of most of the men were traced to disagreement with supervisors or bosses. Even though the

patients disliked argument, they stayed on the job despite the unpleasantness. They were fearful, apprehensive and concerned over their mental and physical health. Sometimes, when a fellow-worker had a heart attack or other illness, a group of employees working with him believed they had the same condition. Blaming overwork was evidently a phony reason for their trouble.

R

MISCELLANY—It's true that "bending the elbow loosens the tongue," experiments at Michigan State University show. Under the influence of alcohol, men relaxed their standards of conformity and increased their fluency . . . Veterans Administration hospitals are using only the narcotic alphaprodine for major and minor surgery. It induces a light "sleep state" from which the patient rouses quickly . . .

R

OUCH!—When your doctor seems to pay little attention to your pain, it's probably because he knows little about it. After studying the meaning of pain, a New York doctor concludes there's a distinction between the pain itself and a man's reaction to it. A Chinese or Eskimo may just grit his teeth while an American will scream with a similar pain. We all have a pain



"ceiling," and once we've reached the excruciating maximum, the pain remains constant. In hospitals, patients seem to complain of post-operative pains after chest and abdominal surgery. Few gripe about pain after an operation on the head and neck, hand, wrist, a skin graft, burn dressing or amputation.

HOW'S YOUR DENTALITY?—Your toothache may be only psychosomatic. That is, your cavities and the general condition of your teeth depend on your type of personality, according to a New Jersey dental researcher. Studies on naval cadets and retrainees indicate that men with good sound teeth tend to have a "heterono-



mous" personality—they're anxious, hostile, rigid, dependent on others and inclined to worry about their health. They have regular medical and dental check-ups and little tooth trouble. On the other hand, men with lots of cavities have an "autonomous" personality—the responsible, intellectual type. Like the absent-minded professor, they forget to brush their teeth, fail to see a dentist or keep appointments with him.

R

TREAT-IT-YOURSELF—Men with high blood pressure will find it much easier to control their condition by using a standard blood-pressure gadget at home. These patients, says a Michigan specialist, can be taught to read their own blood pressure and adjust dosage of drugs properly. Besides being convenient and economical, by cutting down many trips to the doctor's office, the method gives the patient a chance to share the responsibility for looking after himself and to learn to live within his capacities. Anxiety about visiting a hospital or doctor often shoots up a man's blood pressure. So does the customary air of secrecy about a blood-pressure reading. Taking his own at home should have great psychological advantages.

"I Got My Start in Music This 'TEACH-YOURSELF' Way"

...says famous orchestra leader

LAWRENCE WELK

Television Star of
"The Lawrence Welk Show"

[MONDAY AND SATURDAY EVENINGS-ABC-TV]

I got my start in music with a U.S. School Course. How easy it is to learn to read notes and play music this "teach yourself" way! In fact, this school did so much for me that I enrolled my two daughters.

Lawrence Welk



FROM FARM TO FAME. Above are Lawrence Welk and his famous "Champagne Music" orchestra of TV fame. When Welk was a farm lad, a U. S. School of Music Course taught him to read and play music in his spare time.

And Here's What Other Students Say

High School Boy Learns Very Quickly

"Couldn't play a note. Now play at parties. All my friends were surprised and asked me how I learned so quickly." —Bobby Smith, Grove Hill, Ala.

"How Happy I Am!"

"How happy I am. I play for parties, entertainments. Never once thought I could be able to play the piano. Thanks a million!" —Cora Franklin Duke, Bumpass, Va.

Excels Friend Who Has Teacher

"I didn't know a note. Now I play for parties. A friend (taking lessons from private teacher same length of time) is still doing simple exercises." —Marie Van Huile, Manitoba, Canada.

"Friends Were Amazed!"

"Didn't know a note on piano. In a short time I could play simple hymns. Friends were amazed. Now entertain at parties, play at church." —Samuel Moses, Mt. Vernon, Tenn.



Mail Coupon for FREE BOOK

Let us SHOW you why our way to learn music is so EASY—and so much fun! See why our method has been so successful for 59 years. Read actual letters from our students, many of whom never dreamed they could play until we showed them how. Mail the coupon for our valuable 36-

page FREE BOOK. No obligation, no salesman will call on you. It can mean so much to you for the rest of your entire life—if you will mail the coupon TODAY! U. S. SCHOOL OF MUSIC, Studio A92, Port Washington, N. Y. Reduced prices on instruments to our students.



You, Too, Can Play Your Favorite Instrument —
Even If You Don't Know a Single Note of Music.
Now! Start Right Out Playing Real Pieces by NOTE.
No Private Teacher or Special "Talent" Needed.

WHY are you cheating yourself of the thrills of playing your favorite instrument? You think it's "too hard" to teach yourself? You can't afford private lessons? The nearest teacher is too far away? It would take "too long" to learn? You lack "special talent"?

Over 900,000 people have found a simple answer to these common difficulties. One of them was a North Dakota farm boy named Lawrence Welk. Early in life he showed a great love of music, and by 13 had learned to play his father's old "squeeze box" by ear. Then, after years of hard farm labor, came the wonderful day when he was rewarded with a modern accordion. He enrolled in the home study Accordion Course of the U. S. School of Music and was soon playing real music by note. Thus he started on the road that led to fame and a dazzling career, climaxcd by the present triumph of Lawrence Welk and his "Champagne Music" on ABC-TV.

What Can Playing Music Do for YOU?

Of course, you may simply want to learn to play for the sheer joy of it. The thrill of "pouring out your heart" in music. The fun of entertaining your friends—of being invited to play at gay parties, dances, and socials, where you meet interesting people, build your self-confidence. The pleasures of appreciating music more.

Regardless of what YOU want out of music, here's the quick easy way to get it! In just a few weeks, you can be playing REAL MUSIC on the piano, accordion, guitar, saxophone, or whatever your favorite instrument may be. Not by any "trick" method. But actually reading and playing real sheet music—so easily and confidently that your friends will be amazed! They will suspect that you've "known how" for years.

Enjoy All These Advantages

You learn-by-playing. No boring scales and exercises. Lessons consist of delightful songs, hymns, waltzes, etc., with simple how-to-play directions and large clear pictures. Learn right in the privacy of your own home, in any spare time you choose. This easy do-it-yourself way spares you the inconvenience and personal problems of having a private teacher—and costs only about a TENTH as much. No special "talent" or previous knowledge of music needed. Everything is so clearly explained—so easy to understand—even youngsters "catch on" right away. Whole family can learn for price of one. Mail coupon now.

U. S. SCHOOL OF MUSIC Studio A92, Port Washington, N. Y.

I am interested in learning to play, particularly the instrument checked below. Please send me your free illustrated booklet, "How To Learn Music At Home." NO SALESMAN IS TO CALL UPON ME.

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<input type="checkbox"/> Violin	<input type="checkbox"/> Ukelele	<input type="checkbox"/> Harmony
<input type="checkbox"/> Piano Accordion	<input type="checkbox"/> Clarinet	<input type="checkbox"/> Mandolin
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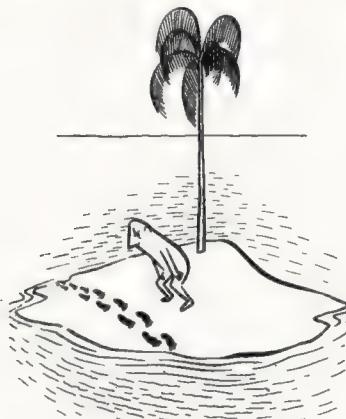
Name..... Age.....

Address.....

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APPROVED MEMBER NATIONAL HOME STUDY COUNCIL

STORIES for STAGS



A young girl was taking a swim in a secluded lake. Suddenly she noticed a young boy sitting on the bank watching her with great big eyes. She shouted at him to leave. Instead, he picked up her clothes and began tying knots in them. She swam to the bank, grabbed an old tub as a shield and advanced angrily on the boy. "Young man," she shouted, "do you know what I'm thinking?"

"Sure do, lady," the kid replied. "You're thinking there's a bottom in that old tub."

Two women were sitting in a bar and grill. One turned and said to the other: "If I'm not in bed by ten o'clock, I'm going home."

"Comrade Speaker," he said, "there's just one thing I want to know. What happens to my unemployment compensation checks when we overthrow the government?"

Mrs. Tracy, busy cleaning in another part of the house, heard the kitchen door slam. Thinking it was her young son, she called out: "I'm in the living room, darling. I've been waiting for you!"

There was silence for a few moments, then a strange voice faltered: "I'm sorry, but I ain't your regular milkman."

The boy friend invited his sweet and lovely up to his apartment to see his etchings. When they arrived at the apartment, she was surprised to see no etchings. In fact, to her amazement, she discovered he had no chairs or any furniture at all. She was floored.

A traveling salesman was about to check into a hotel at Key West, Florida, when he noticed a most charming bit of pulchritude giving him the eye. In a very casual manner, he walked over and spoke to her as if he had known her for years. Both walked back to the desk and registered as Mr. and Mrs.

After a two-day stay, he checked out and was handed a bill for \$350. He looked at it and protested. "There must be some mistake," he said, "I've only been here for two days."

"I know," said the clerk, "but your wife has been here for two months."

The trouble with most newly married girls is their lack of understanding of their husband's salaries. The way they handle the budget, usually there's too much month left over at the end of the money!

During the hunting season a couple of Alabama deer hunters were rather disappointed to find that their favorite guide had deserted them for some visiting fisherman instead. "What's the matter? Don't you like hunters?" asked one of them.

"Like 'em first rate."

"Do fishermen pay more?"

"Nope," the guide admitted.

"Then what's the idea of taking up with them?"

"Friend," the woodsman replied, "I just got plumb tired of being shot at for a deer. So fur, ain't nobody mistook me for a fish."

Not long ago a business executive passed away and his widow was inconsolable. She cried for a week without stopping. Then a lawyer appeared with a check from the insurance company. She stole a look at the amount—\$75,000—sighed, and with a tear in each eye said soulfully, "Believe me, but I'd give \$25,000 of this to have him back!"

There are lots of couples who don't pet in parked cars. The woods are full of them.



"I think you're bluffing, Sam. I'll see you."

Candy rang the doorbell, then was suddenly
pulled into the room full of
leather-jacketed toughs.



the BLONDE who runs the syndicate

She was a thrill-seeking wildcat who busted out of Hell's Kitchen to parlay a beautiful body and a 150 IQ into a million-dollar racket.



By RICHARD E. WHITE

Illustrated by Charles Copriano

► In another three weeks taffy-haired Candy Collins marks her tenth anniversary. Only she's not sure whether she should celebrate, or just go somewhere and cry. Because for the last nine years and 49 weeks she has been: (a) a prostitute; and (b) a madam. Candy isn't proud of it. But neither

is she ashamed of it. She's used to it.

She won't celebrate with a frosty candle-crowned layer cake. She'll probably just sit at the long low walnut and chrome desk in her air-cooled office with its thick rugs and polished wood paneling. And she'll think back to the sweltering (*Continued on page 56*)



In one gigantic explosion, every gun on the front opened up and pumped a blanket of steel into the hidden Red army.

It was a hell of a way to treat an experienced platoon leader.

They had me playing footsie with the North Korean ack-ack boys.

blood bath for the 17th



The Sabre jets shrieked in, adding their deadly rockets to the artillery barrage.

By CAPTAIN RUSSELL G. ARTHUR, USA

► It wasn't that I was gung-ho, or eager to get my head blown off. It was just that I'd served as a platoon leader with the paratroops during World War Two and was an experienced combat officer. So I couldn't see that the job they gave me when I got to Korea made any sense.

"You'll be the divisional photo interpreter," the Seventh Div's G-1 told me when I reported for assignment in March, 1953.

"Photo interpreter?" I howled. "My God, sir! I'm an infantry officer—a company commander!"

The G-1 was a light colonel. He glanced up at me, let his eyes travel significantly to the railroad tracks on my collar—and then looked away. I'd been in the Army long enough to know that meant the interview was over and the issue settled. And not in my favor.

All my moaning and complaining failed to help. Instead of being given command of a company, I was handed several sets of stereoscope glasses—and ordered to interpret.

Oh, I knew what I was doing—more or less. I'd taken several courses in aerial photography and photo interpretation. I'd even done a little of each in the years following V-J Day. But I didn't like it, especially not after

the Chinese launched the first of a series of heavy attacks against the Seventh Division.

"You're flying at 0600," the Division Air Officer informed me.

The dawn was cold and gray at 0600. My jeep pulled up at the airstrip and I stumbled across the field to the operation shack. Two L-19's—unarmed, light, single-engined monoplanes—were warming up on the apron.

"Okay, captain," a second John yelled to me above the racket of the engines. "You ride that one. The cameraman goes in the other."

The pilot of my ship waited only until I was in my seat and had the safety belt secured. Then he revved the engine and the plane shot off the strip.

The rising sun was burning off the morning mist. The white stuff lay shrouding the valleys in rapidly thinning patches.

We were over the front within a few minutes. There wasn't much going on. A few desultory rounds of artillery fire kicked holes in the hills here and there. Otherwise, there was little to show there was anyone alive in the sharply-etched trenches running along the slopes and summits of the hills.

(Continued on page 48)



AARON STERN'S IMPOSSIBLE ESCAPE

I climbed into the tree and tried to become part of it, hoping the Nazis would pass without looking up.

For two years I lived like an animal; hiding in holes, eating berries and filthy bark. I sometimes thought a bullet in the head would be better.

as told to KEVIN JONES
Illustrated by Lou Marchetti

► I lay there in the hole. It was a dank, frozen hole, clawed out of the black, unyielding earth by my desperate hands, and it stunk of my filth. I twisted on the mess of rags that crawled with lice and I looked up at the thatched fir bows that I called a roof. I was dying of starvation.

The anxiety to live is an amazing thing. So many times I had been close to death; so many times I had wished that death would claim me. And so many times I had died in my own mind.

But now I didn't want to die. I would fight it until the end. I rolled over and pushed myself up on one elbow. I felt the strain in the quickened beat of my heart. I also felt the pounding throb. The infection had made a hideous blue and bulging thing of my leg and the fever burned.

In my delirium I had thought of seizing my knife and ripping the sickened leg to the bone. And I had seen myself elated because of this violent victory over torment.

That was it. Victory. To win over something. For years now there had been nothing but defeat. There had been nothing except running away, always being hunted, trusting no one, suspecting everyone, being surrounded by the enemy.

More than ever then, as I crawled for the snowed-in opening to the hole, was I aware of the enemies that stalked the forest. There were the wild dogs who would rip you to pieces in a matter of seconds. Then there were the cunning, cruel men of the Gestapo, the local spies who would sell a man's (*Continued on page 70*)

For five sweaty months, I ruled like a king. But I had to conquer a wilderness full of spear-throwing Indians, knife-happy natives, and over-sexed pagan women.



Our trouble included one man speared, another drowned, and grinning natives who stole everything in sight.

MY 50 MILES OF JUNGLE

By JACK MacDONALD

► The big trouble on my Costa Rican road construction job began when a little guy named Carlos Esterlita rode into the work camp on a donkey early on January 7, 1956. I wasn't surprised to see him, and when he got off his donkey in front of my tent, I stepped out.

"Which one," he asked, without even saying hello, "is the man called Dutch Krueger?"

"I know why you want him," I said, "but I'd rather have you talk to me instead. Come in and have a beer."

He shrugged. He was in no hurry. He'd talk to him later. But he *would* talk to him.

While he was drinking his beer, he said quietly, "You know this Krueger has been with my sister?"

I nodded.

"And you know he has forced her to sin with him?"

I nodded again just to be agreeable. Whether Dutch had forced her or not was a matter open to debate, for we all knew Rosa had sinned with lots of men. I could have told him what could be expect from a sister who is a bum, but you don't go kicking a guy in the teeth like that. Carlos knew she was a bum anyway, and would take care of her himself. But in the meantime, whether Rosa was wrong or not, the family honor had to be defended. I could understand this vicious pride, so I agreed with him completely and tried to talk him out of going after Dutch. Dutch was a damned good (*Continued on page 76*)



When the native women moved in on us, my men got ugly and threatened to mutiny if I didn't let them stay.



BOOK BONUS

CALL GIRL BAIT

He made war on the rats and they swore they would see him hang—even if they had to kill the most beautiful blonde in town to do it.

By M. E. CHABER

Illustrated by Rudy Nappi

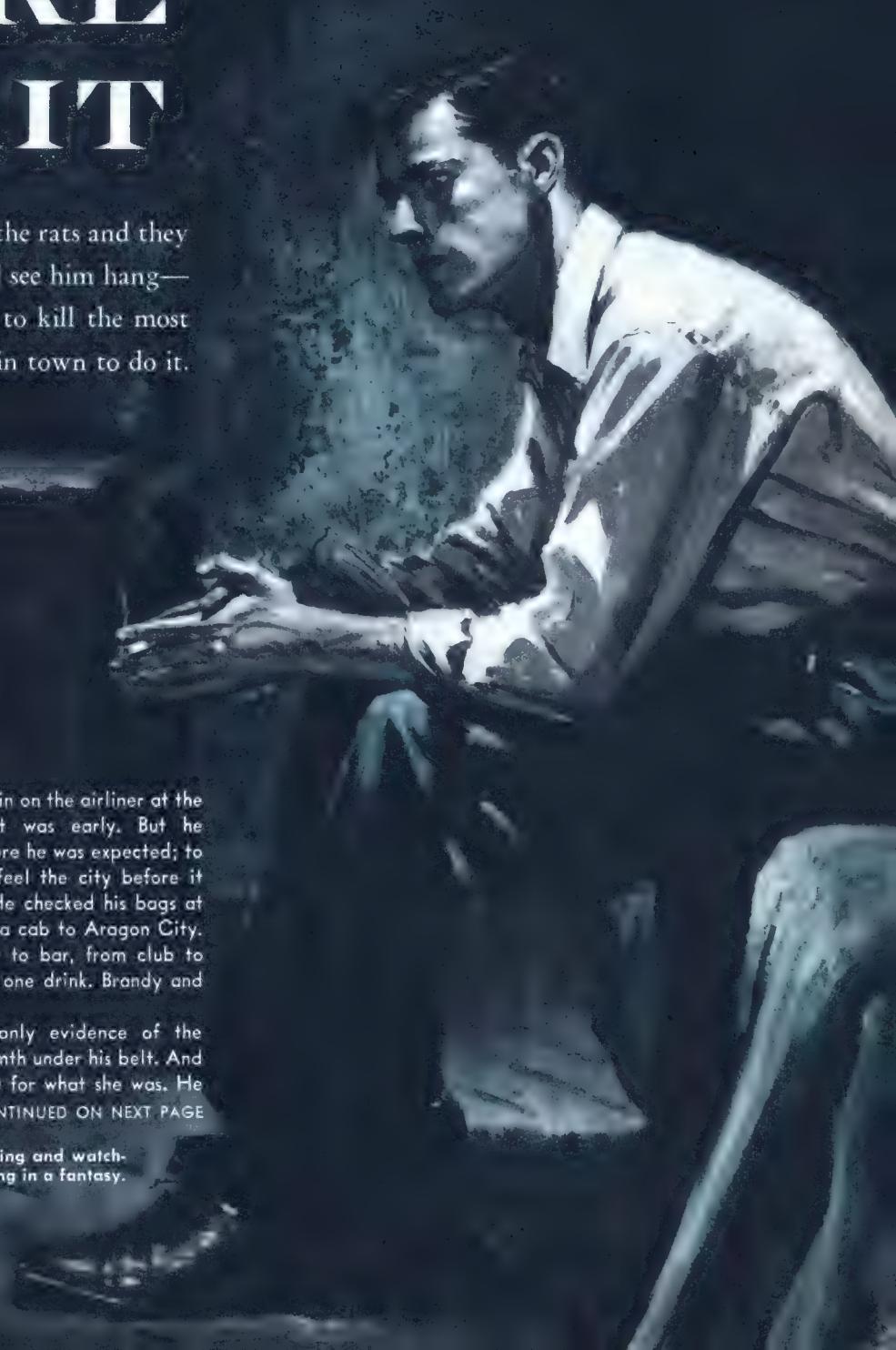
► The man who came in on the airliner at the International Airport was early. But he wanted to arrive before he was expected; to wander around and feel the city before it knew he was there. He checked his bags at the airport and took a cab to Aragon City.

He went from bar to bar, from club to club. In each he had one drink. Brandy and water.

By midnight the only evidence of the brandies was the warmth under his belt. And he knew Aragon City for what she was. He

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

I sat on the bed, smoking and watching her. It was like living in a fantasy.



CALL GIRL BAIT

continued

could feel her lack of roots, the violence that bubbled just beneath the surface.

He walked into a small, dimly lit club on Portola. He sensed a difference as he walked to the bar. Everyone there was better dressed than in the bars he'd visited earlier—sleeker, more enameled.

He ordered his drink and became aware of the woman who sat next to him at the bar. Her perfume reached out to tug at his senses. He took a quick look. Evening dress. Plunging neckline. Mink stole. Careful blonde hair. Her face was familiar. He searched his memory and found the face staring out from a movie screen. He turned back to his drink.

Later he knew she was examining him. He looked at her. She stared back at him. There was excitement in her eyes. And something else.

It was after one when he left the club with her. She handed him her car keys and pointed out the convertible. In the car she leaned against his shoulder, occasionally calling out directions in a sleepy voice.

It was a small estate in the residential section of Aragon City. They left the car beneath the car porch. He unlocked the door with the key and followed her in.

In the modern living room, she tossed her handbag on a chair and turned to him, holding her arms out in drunken gravity.

"Put me to bed," she said simply. She swayed toward him.

He picked up her limp form and carried her out into the foyer. After a couple of wrong guesses, he found the bedroom. He paused uncertainly, then deposited her on the bed. She sagged back on the cover, her eyes closed.

He dropped to one knee and removed her clothes. Then he turned to look at her. He let his breath out slowly. It was a well-cared-for body, delicately curved, the legs strong and shapely.

He pulled the covers down beneath her so that she rested on the sheets. She still seemed submerged in a drunken sleep, but he was suddenly aware that her breathing was too deep and rapid. A panel of light was across her face and he saw the quiver of a curled eyelash against her cheek.

Anger stirred within him as he stood up. A moment later, savagely, he turned back toward her.

Outside, the tempo of the storm picked up with a sullen fury.

Here and there a sleeper stirred uneasily, but the honest citizens of Aragon City slept on, unaware that the storm was ravishing their city.

I WAS DUE in Aragon City at eight that night. On Flight 324 from Denver. I had another brandy and water in a bar on Third Street and got in a cab. It was a quarter to eight when I got to the International Airport.

The girl at the desk said that Flight 324 was on time. I lit a cigarette and took a quick look around the waiting room. There were a lot of people but nobody who looked like they belonged on a committee. Then the PA system came to life.

"Mr. Milo March, there is a telephone call for you in booth three next to the United Airlines counter."

I grinned and ducked out, taking the underground passage to the gates. The phone call meant that they hadn't bothered to ask if the plane was in or that they suspected I was there early. Not that it made any difference. But I was still going to make it look like I came in on the right flight.

After a while the big transport lumbered off the strip and wheeled around with one wing pointing at the gates. When the passengers came off, I walked along with them into the waiting room.

I didn't have to wait long. "Mr. Milo March," the girl's voice said over the loudspeaker, "there is a telephone call for you in booth three next to the United Airlines counter."

I walked over to the booth and took the receiver from the hook. "Milo March," I said.

"Just a minute, sir," the operator said. I waited.

"Milo March?" a new voice asked. It was a man with a salad voice. Crisp.

"Yeah," I said and waited some more.

"This is Willis—chairman of the committee. Did you just get in?"

"Isn't this when I was due?" I countered. I grinned, remembering the twenty-four hours I'd already spent in Aragon City.

"Of course, of course," he said hastily. "We were going to meet you, March, but thought better of it. Will you come straight here? The address is three-two-two Loma Vista Boulevard. The third floor."

"Okay," I said and hung up. I reclaimed the stuff I'd checked the night before and went out and got a cab. I gave the driver the address and leaned back in the seat.

I already had an idea what it was going to be like.



When we were alone, she threw her coat on the chair and swayed forward, holding her arms out drunkenly.



He swung and I waited until the last possible moment, then ducked. His fist crunched as it split the plaster.

You get feelings like that some days. This was going to be a job that could be summed up with one word. Messy.

Two weeks before this Willis had gotten in touch with me by long-distance phone. First he'd told me who he was. Linn Willis. Sometimes consulting engineer to the Air Force. Owner of the Willis Aircraft Corporation in Aragon City, California. Owner of the Aragon City *News*. A big shot. Then he added that he was Chairman of the Aragon City Civic Betterment Committee. I could already smell the next step.

Aragon City was steeped in crime—that was his word, steeped—and they wanted a competent investigator to prepare a report for the Civic Betterment Committee. I had been highly recommended to the committee. They wanted to hire me.

The cab pulled up in front of the building on Loma Vista Boulevard. I paid the driver and lugged my two suitcases into the building with me.

If the reception room on the third floor was any indication, the Civic Betterment Committee couldn't do much better by itself. The rugs were soft, and the lights were softer. The furniture was so modern you began to feel old-fashioned the minute you looked at it. Then you looked at the receptionist and forgot the place even had furniture. She had red hair and it looked real.

She was giving me a fast inventory too and when her eyes met mine I could tell that she knew what I was going to say. So I didn't say it.

"Some joint you got here," I said casually.

"Joint?" she said.

"Yeah." I took another look around the room and then brought my gaze back where it belonged. "This is the hotel, isn't it?"

"This," she said coldly, "is the Aragon City Civic Betterment Committee."

"Honey, they *couldn't* do better than you," I said. I grinned at her. "If this isn't a hotel, maybe they've got some rooms for rent where you live."

She laughed. It was a nice laugh. While I was

enjoying it, I moved over and sat on the edge of her desk.

The door in back of her opened and we both looked up. The man in the doorway was maybe fifty and looked like he had a million for every year of it.

"Miss Carr," he said and it was the same lettuce voice I'd heard on the phone, "you *will* show Mr. March in the minute he arrives!"

"Of course, Mr. Willis," she said. She took another fast look at me. It was obvious that she felt she had to make some explanation about me. "This gentleman—" she began.

"Hold it, honey," I said. I slid off the desk and waited until he looked at me too. "I'm Milo March. I was just getting ready to tell Miss Carr who I was when you came in."

"Oh, was that what you were doing," he said. "Well, we're waiting for you, March."

"I know," I said. We played the waiting game again, then he turned and led the way into the next room. I winked at the receptionist and followed.

There were six other people seated around a big table in the room. It looked like a conference. But I saw one of them before any of the others. She was wearing a different perfume today. And a tailored suit instead of an evening dress. But it was the same careful blonde hair.

Willis had already paused beside her chair. "Mr. March, Miss Vega Russell," he said. "Miss Russell is very civic-minded, but she is perhaps better known as a star of the screen."

"How do you do, Mr. March," she said in a starched voice.

"I've seen Miss Russell before," I said, not bothering to mention that it had been the night before. But I was thinking about it. Long ago I'd come to the conclusion that there are no accidents—that's why I never have any.

But Willis was leading me along to the next person. Another woman. This one was old. Very old, by the testimony of the wrinkles on her face. But her eyes were young and she sat more erect than anyone in the room.

"And this is Miss Elizabeth Saxon," Willis was saying. "She is Aragon City's oldest citizen and has long taken a most active interest in civic affairs." Something about his voice made me think that Linn Willis didn't much like Miss Saxon.

She looked at me with those young-old eyes and snorted. "Well," she said, "at least you look relatively honest. I suppose one can't ask for more."

I decided that Miss Saxon and I would get along.

Willis took me around the table, introducing me to the others. George Stern. A lawyer. Middle-aged and fat. Donald Reid. A banker. He shook hands as if he suspected you wouldn't give his hand back. Sherman Marshall. Commissioner of Parks for Aragon City. A man who was always looking for votes. Dr. David Jilton. Young but with a permanent bedside manner. And if you could believe Willis all of them were so civic-minded they were about to burst with it.

When I'd been introduced, we all sat around the table looking important.

"We," Linn Willis finally said, "are pretty much in agreement that you're the man we want, March, and—"

"Just a minute," I said. "You may be in agreement, but I'm not. First, why do you want to hire me?"

(Continued on page 86)



"Four kings," Farouk said, but when he laid down his cards,

From Montreal to Monte Carlo, he's made and lost a hundred fortunes. And wherever he goes, he remains a man of mystery—even to the women in his life.

By H. M. PIPER
Illustrated by Bob Schulz

► It was at Cannes in the summer of 1951 that corpulent King Farouk of Egypt was doing as badly at poker as he had done at ruling his sandy little kingdom. A dapper little man with four tens had just clipped him for 400,000 French francs, and though this made little difference to the king's bank account, he was seething in anger because the clipper was a commoner.

"Another hand, your majesty?" The little man asked.

THE 1,001 LIVES OF NOVARRO THE TIGER

there were only three showing. "The fourth king," he said puffily, "is me."

"Of course."

The cards flipped out. Both men bet and raised. The hands were finally called at 15 million francs (about \$43,000).

"A flush," the little man said.

"I beat you with four kings," Farouk snapped.

The cards were put down, and the little man brushed his mustache and smiled.

"Come now, your majesty. Play seriously. Of course four kings can beat my flush, but I see only

three kings showing there. Where is the fourth?"

"The fourth," said Farouk, puffing himself up like a sail full of wind, "is me."

The man chuckled politely at the feeble attempt to pull rank. "I'm sorry," he said, "but the only man who is king in poker is the man with the high cards. I'm afraid my flush is even more royal than your royal personage."

The money went into the little commoner's hands, as it had many times since (*Continued on page 50*)



Later on, we figured we'd dump the blonde into the water with the croc so she could make like Sheena the Jungle Girl.

the Day Hollywood

By C. RAY STAHL

We had a croc in our waterhole, a hunter who couldn't shoot, and a game warden on our back. It was time to call out the sexy dames.

► I could see we weren't going to make it. Johnny Lawrence was tramping the accelerator. The Dodge gave it everything she had. And on the opposite flank of the buffalo herd Alan Tarlton was coaxing the last bit of speed out of his hunting car. But as usual the buffalo were running for cover with too much of a head start. It was a good bet they would escape into the bush before we could cut them off.

This had been going on for three frustrating weeks. Every day we searched the game plains for Cape buffalo. Spotting a herd, we would close in cautiously, trying not to spook the brutes. We weren't going to harm them. All we wanted were

some motion picture shots of their ugly faces. All we'd got were monotonous views of retreating buffalo behinds.

That final sprint was the part I feared and hated. That mad dash across the rough terrain with reckless disregard for life and limb and about ten thousand dollars worth of camera equipment. The Dodge would steamroller trees that looked to me like they were big enough to wreck the car. But Lawrence had proved an infallible judge of which was going to give.

Yet we never got off free. Our camp was littered with mangled tires, broken springs and shattered axles. Not to mention battered, bruised and punctured humans.

Suddenly a tremendous crash blotted out those minor complaints. Lawrence gave a mighty twist of the wheel; the car slewed sideways! Somehow the rear end missed the pitfall. Then he straightened out and braked to a stop.

Everyone knew the score: another wart hog hole. We had hit them before.

We sat there limp and despondent, gingerly plucking thorns from tender places, while Johnny got out and assessed the damage. Probably another axle ruined, from the sound of it. And another day shot to hell. Even then the buffalo were lumbering over to lend a hand.

SOP in such a situation was for everyone to unload and pile in with Alan. He would drive us back to camp, pick up the mechanics, and return to help Lawrence make the repairs. I got out. Just inside the outer fringe of the thicket I saw a monstrous hulk—one of the buff. Standing there, 20 yards away, perfectly motionless. Looking us over. And laughing himself to death, most likely.

I didn't have to warn Lawrence. He had already

seen the brute and propped his .470 double against the fender just in case. We left him there.

When we got back to our camp by the Mara River, Arthur St. Eggers was just setting out with his shotgun. Arthur was a character. Square of face and body with reddish hair and complexion and a moustache to match. An apprentice hunter by accident—literally.

Around Nairobi Arthur had quite a reputation. As a screwball. "Flat out—all the way," he loved to boast—and to drive. So it was hardly surprising that Arthur one day splattered himself and his MG all over the landscape.

When he got out of the hospital with a reconstructed leg and a fat insurance settlement, Arthur used the proceeds to buy a hunting car. It was a valuable asset. As I've indicated, chasing animals on the game plains is rough on a vehicle. Any motion picture safari should have at least four or five hunting cars because there will always be one or two on the blocks and spare parts are in short supply. Thus, Arthur had no trouble renting his car and himself for our safari.

He loved to hunt but as camp manager he was mainly limited to supervising our 50 safari boys. Lawrence and Tarlton did most of the shooting for the pot. So late each afternoon Arthur would trudge out in search of variety.

Down there in the Masai were little green pigeons by the thousands. Very tasty eating. They were Arthur's favorite target. But Arthur couldn't hit a bull elephant in the behind with a bass fiddle. The pigeons must have liked it that way.

Boom! Boom! We sat in the mess tent and listened to the reverberating concussions a few hundred yards down river. A moment later a massive swarm of pigeons swept low overhead, temporarily blotting out (*Continued on page 79*)

Loused Up Africa



We kept cranking our camera as the herd chased Arthur, and when he ran for a tree, the animals ran after him.





He stared at her, brushed up against
her, followed her wherever she went.

He could probably slug her and she'd
never be able to identify him. He was

mr. nobody

By WENZELL BROWN

Illustrated by Samson Pollen



James Harris sat bolt upright in the rocking subway train. He was squeezed in so tightly between the fat man on his right and the woman reading a newspaper on his left, that he couldn't have leaned back even if he'd wanted to. This was the way he liked it. There was nothing to interfere with his watching the woman.

She was sitting halfway down the car on the opposite side, her purse and four or five packages piled on her lap. She was a dish, Harris thought, a real prize-winning baby, the kind who wouldn't give a guy like him as much as the time of day.

The thought made him angry. This dame had everything—looks, money, fame of a sort. And what did Harris have? Nothing. He wet his lips with the tip of his tongue and let his anger rise up against her. If things went right this afternoon, he'd more than (*Continued on page 44*)

He squeezed in beside the fat man
and ogled the girl over the
top of his newspaper.

The mouth of the great floe seemed to expand as we shot into it. There was a grating jolt, and we jammed to a stop against the walls. We were buried alive!



We were TRAPPED INSIDE an ICEBERG



We strained our guts on the oars and towed the ship through the ice inch by inch until the cold drove us inside.

By GERALD MADRONES

► "Deck crew—topside!" the Old Man's voice boomed over the intercom. We hit the companionways on the run. The first sight of the surrounding seas was frightening. The vast body of water off the frozen continent was crammed with huge floes—building up great ice ridges as high as 100 feet or more. And beyond the SS *Burleigh*, about a mile to larboard, stood an immense berg, a minor mountain of drifting ice . . .

The storm from the southwest, harsh, blistering, continuous for four days from the eighth of July, had brought on the first signs of the white freeze. It was the time of the year when the currents around Cape Horn are the most treacherous, when the ice drift from the polar cap is driven heavily north. The 4,200-ton British cargo vessel was being swept into the Weddel Sea.

Maneuvering north by northwest in an attempt to skirt the wind, Captain Carl Tedden, 26 years a full master, gave the vessel full head. At one A.M. of July 13th, the SS *Burleigh* was at 57 degrees longitude 12 degrees latitude. And eight hours later, the ship's bearing was 52 degrees longitude 18 degrees latitude. We had been driven 115 miles backwards!

The vessel was in immediate danger of having her bottom ripped open when the captain summoned us. Now, in a desperate effort to get into clear water, he heeled the *Burleigh* on a straight course for the moving berg! Deep under-sea turbulence around the gigantic ice mass kept the waters open. With a running start, under full power, the vessel might be able to bull its way through from that point. The alternative—was the fatal possibility of being frozen in for the full cycle of 11 months before the summer thaw.

The approach was tortuously slow. Lookouts were doubled on the bow and stern, boat deck port and starboard, before and aft of the mid-ship housing. We leaned over the sides, eyeing the

movement of the ice and relaying warnings of protruding spurs to the captain on the flying bridge. The closing mass rushed against the hull with a noise like the scraping whine of a boxcar making a turn on wet rails.

For three hours we were deadlocked. Then, at sometime after 11 A.M., a giant floe to starboard collided with something underneath and split wide open with a cannonading boom. Those of us on deck opened our mouths against the terrific suction in the eardrums. But the *Burleigh* was edging into the water around the berg . . .

Eight hundred feet high, the glazed mammoth hill of ice rose up in two sections. One, pyramidal and relatively smooth on the two sides visible to us as we closed in. The far side of the berg, the section we would have to break away from, resembled a mountain. And from midway to below the waterline, a vast, hollow cavern opened like a gaping wound.

The *Burleigh* moved in a wide arc around the berg, less than 80 yards from it at its closest point. Soundings were taken constantly. A sudden projection below the surface could split us wide open.

The vessel was making progress but it did not seem to be moving at all! Then we realized what was happening. The currents, swift and treacherous, were spinning the berg around! It was like two separate bodies were traveling independent courses in the same orbit. Suddenly the ship was heading directly into the berg: 70 yards . . . 60 yards . . . 50 yards . . .

I was on the boat deck and I bolted for the wheelhouse. Wesbord, the first mate, was at the helm. He had seen the danger and the Old Man had ordered him to "Kill all engines!" But with power cut, the *Burleigh* continued closing with the berg.

The mountain of ice (*Continued on page 82*)

By MAJOR JOHN WRIGHT
CHIEF OF DETECTIVES, RICHMOND, VA.

Illustrated by John Leone

They were mad dog killers, and after their Richmond City Jail caper, every cop in the East was hoping they'd cross his sights.

► George Kauffman was dead, taken for a ride by his pals in Pittsburgh. George Phillips was dead too—under machine guns held in the avenging hands of Washington police officers. And Walter Legenza and Bob Mais were as *good* as dead—or so we thought.

They were locked in a little cell in the Richmond City Jail. Guards patrolled the corridor in front of their cell door. Other guards swarmed through the passages and administration rooms of the jail, and still other special guards paced the sidewalks around the jail.

They were the last of the Tri-State Gang—which we preferred to call “Richmond’s Bloody Bunch.”

Murder was their meat, kidnapping their sport, bank robbery their diversion, payroll lifting their play, and hijacking their hobby. But all that was over now. We had convicted them of murder. Standing in Hustings Court they had heard a jury announce its verdict: “*Guilty.*” And they had heard Judge John L. Ingram pronounce sentence: “*Death.*”

Now the two were waiting only to be transferred to the Virginia State Penitentiary sometime in the next 24 hours. Then they would be electrocuted.

Yes, Walter (*Continued on page 74*)

Panting from exhaustion, Mais hauled his semi-conscious partner into a boxcar.

DEATH of a MOB

leone





THE BAG-BUSTING SPREE

By JOSEPH STOCKER
Illustrated by Valigursky

► There, over Marieulles, he spotted it—a long, black, sausage-shaped blob, rolling lazily at the end of its cable 100 feet above the shell-splattered town.

Looks harmless enough, he thought. And then his mouth tightened beneath his goggles. Yeah, harmless like a nest of Arizona scorpions. You jumped one of these babies and you had your hands full. The Germans didn't like you tampering with their

observation balloons—their precious *Drachen*. Going in after them was like going across the threshold to hell.

Well, all right. Hell, here we come!

Down went the Spad, plunging almost at a right angle to the ground. The roar of wind and engine numbed his senses; the slipstream plucked furiously at his helmet and goggles. He glanced at the speedometer. 160 . . . 170 . . . 180 . . . 185 . . . This Spad—this fragile creature of wires and wood and canvas—could it endure the strain?

Now the AA guns were getting the range. Brown

He was a lone wolf whom everybody despised, and no man would fly cover for him. But in



He let loose with a long, blazing burst, and the balloon disappeared in a hot ball of flame.

OF THE ARIZONA KID

puffs of smoke piled up around him, until the sky seemed full of them, and there was death in each puff. All the Huns had to do was match puff to plane—one good shot—and that would be that.

But there wasn't time now to worry about it. The balloon grew fat in his sights.

He reached for his guns and got off a burst. Then he whipped out of his dive, arched past the sausage in a long, looping turn and looked back.

A miss!

He made another pass.

Missed again!

A third pass. A long, blazing burst from his guns this time. And then *PHO-O-O-O-M!*

The great bag exploded in a ball of flame and smoke. His plane leaped, then steadied under his touch. As he streaked for home, the tense line of his mouth relaxed into a wide grin.

The date was September 12, 1918. The place: France—the St. Mihiel sector. Frank Luke, Jr., the wild kid from Arizona, had got his first balloon. But, more than that, he had set in motion one of the strangest and most spectacular hunting sprees to be recorded in all of World (Continued on page 66)

18 crazy days, he convinced them he was the deadliest killer on the Western Front.



HALF-GERMAN HALF-IRISH HOTROD



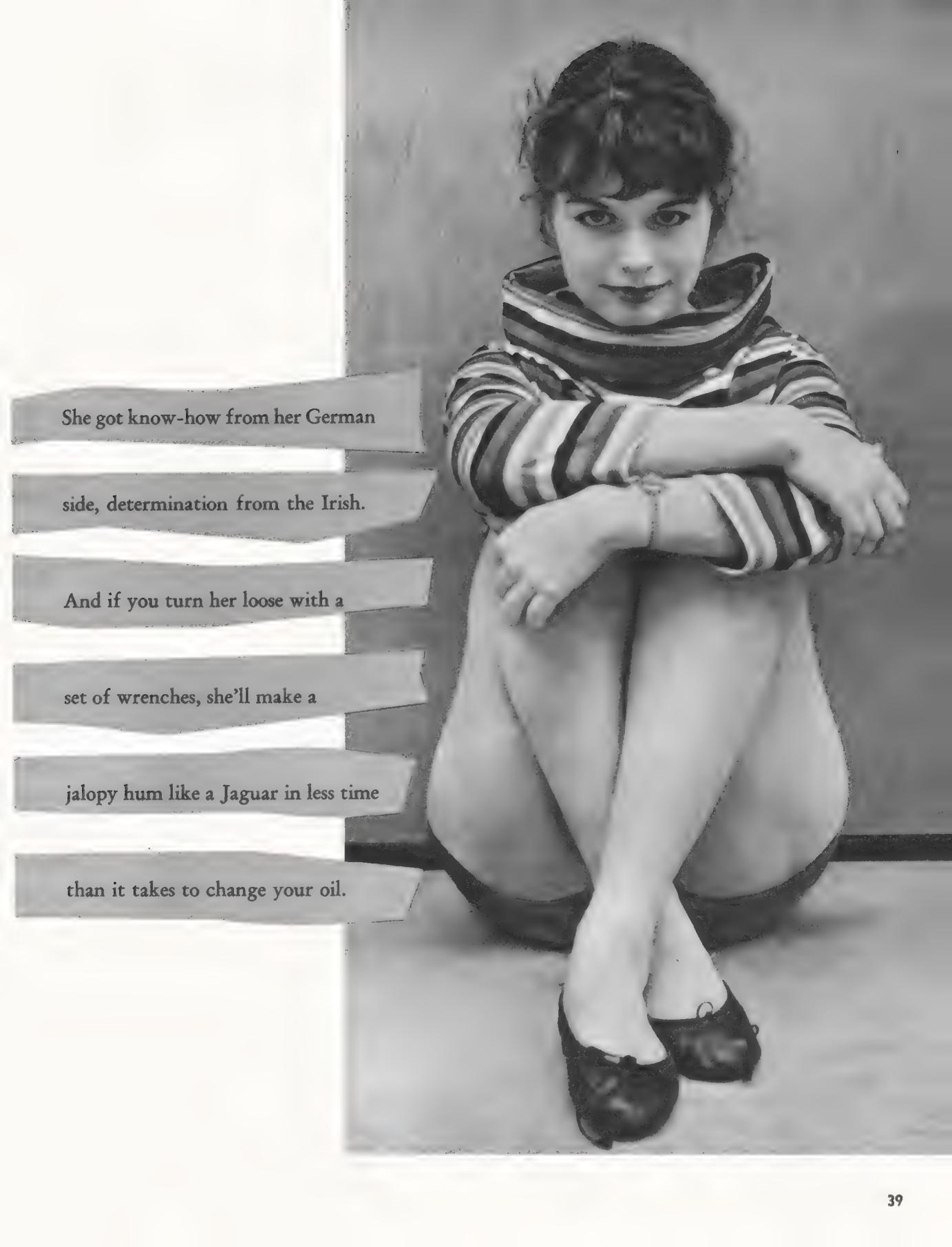


They're touting big-eyed Nelle Bedell as a James Dean in skirts because she's a mirror image of the late actor in many ways—even down to a passion for cars.

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE ➤

HALF-GERMAN HALF-IRISH HOTROD





She got know-how from her German

side, determination from the Irish.

And if you turn her loose with a

set of wrenches, she'll make a

jalopy hum like a Jaguar in less time

than it takes to change your oil.

INCIDENT AT THE JAWBONE

There was a bandit who hadn't stolen anything and a widow who didn't grieve. It smelled bad and Makay was ready to quit. Then he saw the girl with the .44.

By HARRY WIDMER

Illustrated by Tom Ryan

MALE Fiction Makay stood silently in the entrance of the empty Jawbone Saloon, his arms parting the batwings. Behind him, the rising sun climbed slowly out of the jagged foothills; touched his broad back and cast his shadow into the saloon.

Makay's shadow told much about him; for the shadow was a rakish one: tilted Texas hat, twin tails of a knotted neckscarf fluttering in the breeze, sloping shoulders and lean waist, and the flaring butts of big Colts jutting from his thighs.

The shadow told much and, again, it told little—for it showed nothing of the hard, bright anger in his eyes.

The silence of the early morning was broken by the sharp stomp of his grulla horse at the hitchrack. The grulla was fitted for travel. The stock of a Winchester angled from a saddle scabbard, and a warsack was tied behind the cantle. A blackened coffee pot and a skillet were lashed to the warsack.

The Jawbone was a combination saloon and hotel; a two-story structure which squatted cattycorner at the intersection of Main Street and Hawkins Street.

Makay glanced both ways along Main and both ways along Hawkins. There was not a human or horse in sight. The town of Atlas had not yet come to life on this Saturday morning. Makay stepped from the clear freshness of the new day into the dank saloon. The batwings flapped on squeaky springs behind him.

The hard, bright anger in Makay's eyes slowly faded and in its place came a look of puzzled curiosity. His gaze studied the scattered rubbish and cigarette stubs on the plank flooring. There was enough litter to account for a Saturday night wingding; yet last night was Friday, a usually quiet night.

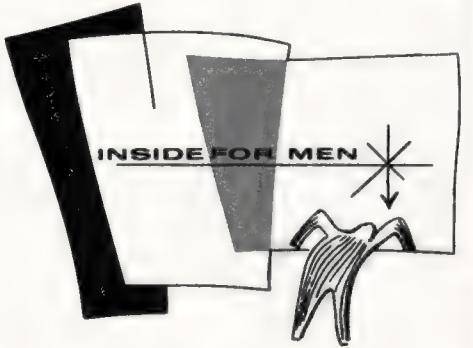
A sudden rattling of bottles swung Makay's eyes to the bar. At the far end, an old man lifted a huge basket of empty bottles and made his way to the back door. The swamper didn't see Makay. And Makay followed silently, having no use for tinkling spur chains that made a man sound like a belled cat.

At the back door, Makay (*Continued on page 60*)





The two guns boomed with one noise
and the man in the middle hit the floor.



MOTOR MEMO

The real pleasure in owning a VOLKSWAGEN comes when you fork over a buck a week for gasoline instead of the usual five with a standard car... TELL A GUY HOW MUCH IT COSTS HIM IN GAS MILEAGE and he'll forget all about the higher horsepower... ANOTHER STORY TO ILLUSTRATE THE CADILLAC MYTH: A union leader recently said, "If I owned one CADILLAC, all hell would break loose and I'd get ridden out of town on a rail. If I had three CHRYSLERS, no one would say a word..."

About the turn of the century in Pennsylvania, the FARMER'S ANTI-AUTOMOBILE ASSOCIATION lobbied to have this law put into the books about cars: "Automobiles traveling on country roads at night must send up a ROCKET EVERY MILE, then wait ten minutes for the road to clear. Driver may then proceed with caution, blowing his horn and shooting off ROMAN CANDLES. In case a horse won't pass an automobile on the road, THE DRIVER MUST TAKE THE MACHINE APART AS RAPIDLY AS POSSIBLE AND CONCEAL THE PARTS IN THE BUSHES..."

FISH AND GAME GAMBITS

THAT \$15 COYOTE BOUNTY IS BIG MONEY TO THE SMART APPLES who hunt them from the air by light plane, pick off dozens in a single day...

It's an odds on bet YOU CAN'T RESIST a new dry ice DUCK DECOY. It bobs its head two to four times a minute imitating a feeding bird. One charge of dry ice allows the

bird to feed for three hours...

THERE ARE HUNTERS WHO SWEAR that the wild-est, fiercest animals of all are some of those funny old ARCTIC BEASTS. If bothered, a sea lion will stomp a man's blood out, and those comical old king penguins can break two legs with a flick of their powerful flippers... The dangerous part of WATER SKIING involves the towboat where there's generally one person facing backward so he can keep his eye on the swimmer. THE RESULT: TOW BOATS SKIMMING UP ON BEACHES KILLING PEOPLE, DECAPITATING SWIMMERS.

THINK THIS ONE OVER.. IT'S GOOD NEWS FOR ANGLERS. There are more fish in the sea right now THAN HAVE EVER BEEN CAUGHT IN ALL HISTORY...

SMART MONEY

Phenix City regulars don't mourn the old B-Girls, but it hurts them not to be able to scare up A GOOD BUG GAME which pays off on combination of numbers taken from the daily totals of the N.Y. Stock Exchange...

Europeans still fall for the Confederate money gag. They'll cash REBEL NOTES for thousands of dollars... Tax inspector in France came out with a book called "A COMPLETE GUIDE TO TAX DODGING..."

ONE ARMCHAIR WAY TO COLLECT A FAST BUNDLE is by tipping the U.S. Customs Office. If you know someone's going to SMUGGLE a load of valuables into the States, the U.S. Customs will fork over 25 per cent of whatever loot they recover as a reward



FISH AND GAME GAMBITS



SMART MONEY



MOTOR MEMO

PLUS ONE-FOURTH OF THE FINE LEVIED AGAINST THE SMUGGLERS. One Boston tipster hauled in \$11,000 recently... A BIG WEST COAST BUSINESS: Renting rollaway beds for \$6 a week in crowded Los Angeles...

FIGURE YOU'RE IN HOT WATER if your debts add up to more than one-fifth your annual take-home pay...

UP-TO-DATE URANIUM HUNTERS NOW CANVASS 40 SQUARE MILES AN HOUR USING ELECTRONIC DETECTION DEVICES that are airborne. The gadgets record uranium oxide ore within 1000 feet on either side of plane's path... Don't be suckered into a new home with promises of a "family" room. It's a fancy new name for the old dining room...

SPORT BEAT

BEST EXAMPLE OF PLAYING THE GAME RIGHT DOWN TO THE WIRE: Knute Rockne kept his team keyed up at half time in a RED dressing room (red is supposed to excite you) and always housed the visiting team in a BLUE one (blue is supposed to cool you off)... NEW KICK IN MIAMI IS SKIING ON SAND DUNES... They say Stan Musial could hit .350 for the rest of his life if he took all the rests Ted Williams takes.... HERE'S WHAT'S WRONG with those walkie-talkie units in which coaches tell quarterbacks which plays to use. There's nothing in the book to prevent an opposing club from tuning in... Why do they keep calling footballs "pigskins?" All footballs in use are made from cowhide... Even hotshot bullfighters tremble a little at the

mention of Miuras bulls. They are never brought to point of complete submission. One of them killed the great Manolete... THERE IS SUCH A THING AS A CLUTCH BALLPLAYER NO MATTER WHAT ANYONE SAYS. Some of our greatest athletes turn sick when they're called upon in a tight situation... If you think SPITTERS are treacherous, get old-timers to tell you about "refrigerator balls." When the home team pitcher was ahead, he'd send for them to be taken out of the icebox. Hitting them was like hitting balls of WET COTTON...

HOME HINTS

THE GREAT THING ABOUT CHLORDANE, the new anti-termite chemical, IS THAT IT WON'T HARM SOIL AND PLANTS LIKE OTHER KILLERS... There's a tiny plastic carbonator floating around you can stick in a corner of your refrigerator. YOU GET ENOUGH CHARGED WATER FOR 250 DRINKS... If you're hot for power tools, but don't know where to start, A CIRCULAR SAW IS YOUR BEST BET. It's the workhorse of the shop, will rip, cross-cut, miter, cut compound angles, and with attachments can cut dadoes and mouldings.... Don't let anyone FOX you into a PLUMBING revision if you're remodeling your home. IT MAY STAND YOU AS HIGH AS \$300 to readjust a tub that cost only \$75... Careful not to build your fence around the house too high. A neighbor can say you're blocking off her air and ruining her sunbathing, HAUL YOU INTO COURT AND MAKE YOU PAY...



Mr. Nobody

Continued from page 29

even up the whole bloody score with her.

He ought not to be staring so hard, he warned himself. Then he grinned. Who noticed him? Especially with a looker like Mabel Kent close at hand.

Harris couldn't have torn his eyes away from her if he wanted to. Something about her got through to him, made his pulse race, scooped out a hollow place at the pit of his stomach so that he felt almost as though he were falling. She was a doll, all right. A bit on the flashy side; platinum blonde hair, smooth pink skin and overfull crimson lips made her so. She wore a lot of jewelry, too much perfume and her bottle-green dress stretched too tightly across her bosom. The arrogant way in which she walked and held her head showed that she knew what she had. But she wouldn't give it out easy. To get close to Mabel Kent, you'd need plenty of folding stuff in your pockets.

Harris had been following her for more than three weeks. But he was willing to bet that he could walk right up and speak to her and she wouldn't remember ever having seen him before. That burned him, yet it gave him a sense of power too. Almost as though he were an invisible man.

That's the way it had always been with him ever since he was a kid. In the crowded schoolrooms, in the teeming slums where he was raised, he was a complete nobody, the little guy who wasn't there. Nobody bothered him; they just left him alone. He had been an ordinary kid, shorter than most, with a pale face, undistinguished features, hair of an indeterminate brown and eyes that were a watery gray. Even his name was commonplace. Few people ever bothered to remember it. He'd never had a nickname either. He wasn't that important to anybody.

Harris had lived alone with his mother, a vague, defeated little woman who subsisted on relief checks. He never got close to anyone. No girl friends, not even a buddy. There'd been a time when he'd tried to change things, work his way into the gang that hung around the corner drug store. It hadn't panned out. They beat him up and once they'd beaten him, they forgot all about him, never bothered him again.

Next he'd tried wearing flashy clothes, talking loud, hammering metal cleats on his shoes so that he made a lot of noise when he walked. Now and then he'd draw a snicker but that was about all. Nobody noticed him unless he thrust himself upon them, and then something unpleasant always happened. So pretty soon he'd given it up. That was when he'd learned the advantages of being a nobody.

He'd discovered this hidden gift almost by accident. One day he'd walked into the drug store with a nickel to buy a candy bar. But the girl behind the counter had

been too busy yacking with a couple of sharpie kids to pay him any mind. He tapped the nickel on the glass but all she did was turn her head and throw him a pained look.

He picked up a candy bar and thrust it in his pocket, then another and another until his pockets were bulging. He tossed the nickel down on the counter and walked out. He was all shaky inside and sweat had sprouted out across his forehead and the back of his hands. He expected to be grabbed and dragged down to the police station. But nothing happened—nothing at all. And when he finally gathered up enough nerve to go back to the drug store, the fat girl's eyes slid across his face as though she'd never seen him before. That's when he knew.

What he had, a real gift for being inconspicuous, was one that almost amounted to genius. His worries were over. He'd never starve or have to do menial work. He could take anything he wanted and no one would ever see him do it.

He quit school and started drifting. At first he filched in the five-and-ten-cent stores, the cheap, crowded markets, picking up anything that struck his fancy.

His fingers grew nimble but he knew that wasn't the secret of his success.

He could wander in and out of bars, hotel lobbies, restaurants, snatching up a purse, a wallet or a loose bill. Nobody noticed him while he was around; nobody missed him when he was gone. Instead of fighting against his nondescript appearance, Harris began to cultivate it. Even when he had money, he wore a plain blue serge suit, a white shirt, and plain tie.

But even while he practiced being inconspicuous, he couldn't hold down a dream that haunted him. Some day James Harris would be a big shot, famous, the talk of him on everybody's lips.

But until that time, the years rolled by and Harris remained simply a petty thief. Now and then he got a job, always a piddling little one that he hated, like being a stock clerk or a packer. After a few weeks he'd drift away.

Harris knew he wasn't going to be president, not even a senator or a representative. He wasn't going to be a moving picture star or a great novelist. But somehow there had to be a short cut to fame. Some of the kids he'd known in the slums had made the headlines. How had they done it? Rackets. A big score. Killed somebody. But they'd all been sent up the river or taken the hot squat in Sing Sing, too. It was the same old story: You made a name for yourself, then you traded your name for a number. That was strictly for the birds, not for a hip guy like James Harris.

All the same if you were smart enough

you could get away with murder. The word murder touched off something inside of him. There were plenty of murderers who never got caught. And they didn't have half the equipment Harris had. Like the Black Dahlia case out in California. Like Jack the Ripper.

Anonymous fame—that was the ticket. It suited Harris to a T.

He started reading books about criminals. Most of these guys were pikers. That was why they landed up on the gallows or in the electric chair. Come to think about it, even Jack the Ripper wasn't so hot. All his victims were street women, derelicts, drabs. Harris could shoot a lot higher—society women, actresses, the rich and famous. He could make them all shudder at the thought of him. They'd lock themselves up at night, be afraid to walk the streets even in daylight.

At first it was all a dream. Then Harris began to plan. He wouldn't need a weapon. A gun was noisy and a knife wasn't quick enough.

His hands! He knew how strong they were in spite of his appearance of weakness. They were all he would need—except a victim.

He wasn't in any hurry. When he slept, he'd feel his hands encircling smooth, warm flesh and he'd press harder and harder until he woke up. He'd be covered with perspiration and so excited he couldn't go back to sleep again. Still he bided his time. It couldn't be just any woman.

Then he saw Mabel Kent and he knew in a flash that she was the woman. He didn't know her name or who she was, but he recognized instinctively that she was the target for the homicidal drives that racked his days. She was the enemy, the personification of all the women who wouldn't give themselves to little men like James Harris. He'd never win from her more than a glance of contempt, a faint expression of derision or distaste.

He'd seen her leaning over the perfume counter in a Fifth Avenue shop. He couldn't see her face, only the sensual lines of her figure and the contours of her rounded arm and neck. Her legs were nice, a little heavy at the calves, tapering down to slim ankles, the kind Harris liked.

She completed her purchase and turned, her eyes sweeping over him. He started before he remembered he didn't have to worry. Her gaze went on past him. He studied her face. It was just the way he'd pictured it in his dreams, fine-boned and firm-fleshed. Her cheek bones were wide, giving a depth to her cool blue eyes. He hadn't made any mistake. This was the woman, all right.

She was moving out of the shop onto the crowded avenue. He stood still until the crowd closed in around her. Suddenly a wave of panic hit him. He should have stayed close, not taking any chances on losing her. He darted forward, sweat pouring from his face, his hands trembling. He needn't have worried. You couldn't lose a dame like this. She stood out like a neon sign in a dark alley.

After that he stuck close behind her, never more than a few feet away. Other

men turned to stare at her. Harris cast baleful glances at them. Couldn't they see he'd staked this dame off? He was surprised when she turned in at a subway kiosk. You'd expect a fancy frill like this to ride around in a Caddy. Or a taxi. But the subway made the chase easy. So why should he kick?

He tailed her to an apartment house on the West Side, just off Riverside Drive. He was right there on the steps when she dug out the key from her purse and opened the mailbox. After she'd gone in, he'd read her name on the mail-box. Mabel Kent—that was all.

He'd been disappointed in the place where she lived. He'd expected a plushy backdrop for a dame as smooth as this one. He looked the house over. A shabby old brownstone with an ornate glass door in front, four stories high with only apartments on each floor. Then it dawned on him. She'd like things cosy and private so that no one could stick his nose into her business. It confirmed his earlier impression of her. His lips formed a thin disapproving line. He'd picked the right woman. She had plenty coming to her.

Mabel Kent—the name suddenly rang a bell. He was an avid reader of the scandal sheets that gave the "inside dope" on the famous and near famous. He dredged his memory for the details of the stories about Mabel Kent. She had been a show girl who'd married a wealthy playboy. She'd ditched him to run off with a band leader. A couple of divorces. A role in a Broadway musical. Some TV appearances. Kent had never been tops, but she'd never been bottom either.

HE stood in the doorway opposite the brownstone, thinking. She didn't know it but pretty soon she'd be on the front pages. Harris would do that for her. He'd give her more fame than she'd ever had. He looked down at his hands, flexing the strong fingers.

After that there was no room in his life for anything but Mabel Kent. He learned all about her habits, her foibles, how she spent each hour of the day. She rose late, never before two or three. Harris was always there, idling on the corner, lounging in a doorway, ready to pick up her trail. He never, never spoke to her, but he was never far away. Sometimes he took the table next to hers in a restaurant, the seat opposite on a bus. If she had ever smiled, nodded, even drawn away, his resolve might have been weakened. But she was oblivious to his presence.

She slept on the third floor front, her bed not far from the dormer window. He could glimpse her sometimes when she got up, her blonde hair disheveled, her face a little pouchy without makeup. But by the time she hit the street, she'd look like a million dollars again. He'd feel a welling of pride inside himself. This was the babe he'd picked, the one to share the big adventure with him.

MOST of her afternoons she spent by herself. She didn't have any women friends. But the evenings were different. She never spent a night alone. There were plenty of men in her life. A different guy almost every night. But they all ran to type. Big, beefy studs with a lot of flash

to them. Clothes made to order, fancy cars, free spenders.

He'd wander often to the block where Kent lived, haunting the place like a shadow, waiting for her to come home. He even rented a furnished room only a few blocks away so he'd never be far from her. He was always there when she showed up. He'd watch while her friend of the evening helped her out of the car. Watch while they ascended the stone steps together. The next few minutes would be terrible ones. They'd be climbing the stairs and he couldn't see them. When the lights clicked on in the third floor front, he'd let out his breath but he wouldn't move away. Not for a long time.

The pictures which formed in his mind created an exquisite torture within him, a compound of hate, pain, pleasure, envy, excitation and frustration. Sometimes he'd want to rush up the stairs, kick down the door, confront Mabel Kent with her duplicity. Couldn't she understand? She belonged to him, James Harris. Nobody else had a right to her.

He'd check the mad impulse. After all, all he had to do was wait. These lovers of hers were men of straw, shadows, unreal. They could never know, never experience the final intimate rapture was to exist between himself and this woman. At times, he could almost bring himself to pity them.

After the first week or so there was no reason to wait. He could strike at any time and be sure of success. But that

would bring the game to a close before he had fully tasted its savor. He thought up excuses to procrastinate, set imaginary obstacles in his own path.

Hanging around the block day after day was dangerous, but he couldn't bring himself to make the final play. Not without a sign. Not without a word from her. But that afternoon the sign had come. He'd followed her downtown while she shopped, trailed her from one shop to another.

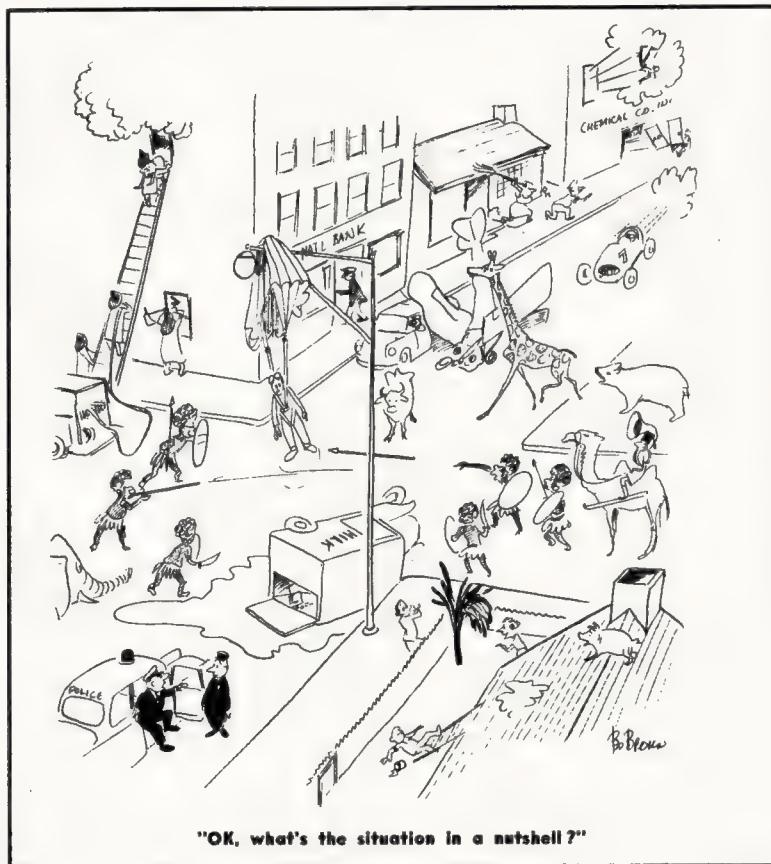
She'd been leaving Spicer's when her high heel had slipped on the polished floor. She caught herself in time to prevent a fall, but some of her packages fell from her arm. One of them slithered to within a few inches of Harris' feet. He picked it up and handed it to her.

She'd said, "Thanks. Thanks a lot," smiling automatically as she would to any stranger. Her eyes had remained blank, unseeing. Then she had turned away limping a little, not even glancing back at him.

He wanted to rush after her, pull her around, make her look at him. He wanted to shout, "Can't you see me? Don't you know I'm alive?" But he held his tongue. There'd be time for that later. He stood still, hating her, yet wanting her too.

This was the day. He wouldn't wait any longer. He and Mabel Kent would be joined together in a relationship more intimate, more enduring than any of her lovers had known.

He made no conscious effort to follow her, so it was almost with a sense of surprise that he found himself beside her on



"OK, what's the situation in a nutshell?"

She tried to scream as he choked her, but the noise came out as a gurgle.

the subway platform. He entered the car behind her. There weren't many seats left and she had taken one of them. He wanted to stand so that he could see her better but his knees went weak and threatened to buckle under him. That was why he squeezed in between the fat man and the old woman with the newspaper.

Now that the game was drawing to a close, his hatred passed and he felt an almost maudlin affection for Mabel Kent. He wanted to go to her, murmur words of endearment. She seemed to him a beloved child who had to be punished, yet who needed reassurance that the punishment would be quick.

TEARS of self-pity burned his eyes. He'd miss her. Miss the long, lonely vigils in the doorway opposite her house. The train jolted to a stop and she got off. There was no reason for him to follow her. There was no place she could go but home. So he might as well stop at the florist shop for the box of roses he needed for his plan.

He couldn't bring himself to leave her, however. There was so little time left. He wanted to spend every minute of it close to her. He trailed her to the door, stood on the sidewalk watching the supple movement of her body, the flick of her legs as she disappeared up the stairway. Only then did he walk back toward Broadway.

He chose the roses with care, heavy blood-red blossoms, almost black at their throats. This would be his gift to her.

With the roses in his arm, he returned to the block, shambling along slowly like a stranger, pretending to peer at the numbers. He let himself into the foyer, thumbed the bell, and listened to the burr of the automatic release.

When he was halfway up the stairs he heard her door click open and the tap of her heels in the hall. She was peering down at him over the railing but she wouldn't be surprised when she saw the box of flowers. She got them all the time.

She was in her room before he hit the landing but she hadn't bothered to close the door. She'd taken off her dress and put on a loose-fitting housecoat. She was standing before her dresser, fumbling with her purse, taking out a coin. A tip.

He almost laughed, then his anger came flooding back. But it wasn't a blinding anger, he could see her more clearly than ever before, that what he had to do was right.

He entered the room quietly and heeled the door shut behind him. She looked up at the soft slam of the door and a frown creased her forehead. He approached her, almost apologetically, and held the box out to her. He said, "The man who sent them, he wanted you to look at them, to see if they're okay."

She hesitated, then lifted the lid. The blood-red roses were in front of her. She gave a little gasp of pleasure and her fingers explored for a card. She said wonderingly, "They're gorgeous. But who sent them?"

Harris spoke very softly to her. "I did." Her glance lifted to his face but her expression was one of confusion rather than alarm.

He fought to keep his manner calm, not to frighten her too soon. "Don't you remember me?"

"No," she answered. Then her breath sucked in and fear came to her eyes.

HE stayed still. She was looking at him now, he thought, really seeing him for the first time. Her eyes widened in panic. She started to back away from him. He followed her.

She dropped the roses and they spilled across the floor between them. She said, "You're the man this afternoon . . ." Her voice trailed off and he could see she was getting ready to scream. He couldn't permit that.

He threw himself upon her and his hands circled her throat just in time. The scream was cut off almost before it started. It came out as a gurgling murmur.

He bent her backward, his fingers biting deeper and deeper into the soft column of her flesh. She tried to struggle, lashing out at him with her feet, raking at his wrists with her long nails. But her strength was no match for his.

HE flung her down on the bed and knelt beside her, the pressure of his fingers growing stronger. She lay still, but still he dared not release his grip. He still had not had satisfaction. He squeezed harder, harder, to produce the burst of emotion that he wanted, and when he could squeeze no more, he suddenly wanted to scream.

It wasn't the way he'd expected it to be!

There was no exultation. Nothing. Only the blindness of despair and the wish to cling to her forever and ever. He lost all sense of time as he crouched beside her. His fingers grew numb and his wrists hurt but still he could not let her go. Finally he fell across her. His face rested on the pillow close to hers, and he shut his eyes.

He had no idea of how long he remained beside her but when he looked up, the room was dark and the windows in the houses across the street showed squares of yellow light. Panic twisted at him, sent him scuttling across the room. He stumbled, grasped at a chair and sent it crashing to the floor.

The noise sobered him, brought him back to his senses. He felt along the wall for the switch, flicked it on, and stood trembling in the unexpected brilliance. The roses were a trampled mass at his feet. Automatically he picked one up.

He was acting crazy, he thought. He had to get out fast. He straightened up and forced himself to remain still for a moment. He mustn't flip. He had to relax, play it cool.

He let himself out into the dim hall. He walked rapidly but without stealth, as he'd trained himself to do. The stairs were carpeted. They made no sound beneath his feet. He reached the next landing safely and started along the corridor.

Then the door beside him opened.

A woman stood in the doorway, peering out near-sightedly. She was a short stocky woman with hennaed hair. She wore a dowdy purple dress and her eyes were bright behind the lenses of her glasses. Harris knew the type, a busybody.

He wanted to plunge headlong down the last flight of stairs. But he was paralyzed with terror. The woman stepped into the hall, gave him one swift incurious look and then passed by him to the railing and peered upward.

Her blank gaze had told him all he needed to know. Why did he have to remind himself after all these years of the lesson he'd learned in the drug store? He pulled himself together and kept on walking. At the bend of the stairs, he heard the woman's querulous voice. "Something's going on up there in that Kent woman's apartment."

His head jerked around but she wasn't talking to him. She was speaking over her shoulder to someone in the doorway. She'd forgotten him already. The nagging fury smoldered inside him. He'd like to sink his fingers into the old witch's scrawny neck, make her look at him, the way Kent looked before she died.

Mabel Kent—at least the memory of her staring eyes sent a pleasant tingling sensation through him, even if the strangling hadn't. There was one dame who'd seen him for what he really was, not a nonentity but a killer, a big shot, a guy who'd soon be a legend in crime.

Outside on the street he stopped to light a cigarette. He sucked the smoke deep into his lungs. He felt almost the way he had the time he'd tried a reefer, big, powerful, strong.

But it was only a beginning, and he had to strike again soon—for several reasons. One was to get the feeling of exultation that had eluded him. The other was to make sure people would know.

MAYBE the press wouldn't catch on quick that this was a juicy story, just the first of a series of murders. Next time he'd have to leave a trade mark of some kind. His fingers touched the crushed rose in his pocket. It brought a smile to his lips. After this he'd always honor the woman of his choice by bringing a gift of roses.

Excitement plucked at him and he scurried along the street so fast that several times he almost bumped into people. It didn't really matter. After a quick glance of irritation they never gave him a second look.

A night club loomed up ahead. A woman stepped out of a cab and under the lights. She was lush-figured and her hair glowed like silver in the artificial glare. She was a celebrity of some sort because a little knot of people had already formed about her. Harris could hear her laughter and the bright chatter of her voice.

He slid his way into the crowd until he was close beside her. He forgot all about Mabel Kent.

This was the woman, the one for whom he'd really been searching. ***

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We flew at about 3,000 feet, a fair altitude, considering that some of the mountains were only 500 or 600 feet below us.

The other L-19 was flying on our right. I saw the photographer hunched over the complicated camera equipment that was taking the pictures we needed.

Even at our relatively slow speed, it was almost impossible to distinguish much on the ground. The Chinese are experts at camouflage, and they'd put everything they could into deep caves and tunnels.

"Hold on!" came from the pilot. He threw the ship into a sharp bank. I wondered why—until I saw the smoking tracers streaking by on both sides. The Red was using his heavy machine guns that morning.

The remainder of the hour we spent in the air consisted of more of the same. Then we turned around and ran home.

Thirty minutes after we'd set our wheels down, the photographs were developed and printed. I went to work on them with my stereoscope. The gizmo gives aerial shots a three-dimensional effect and makes it possible to detect men, equipment, new earthworks and even camouflage netting.

There was nothing out of the ordinary in the pictures. Whatever they showed had been recorded on previous photographs.

"Nothing to report, sir," I told the G-2. "My trip was a waste of time . . ."

THIS Ops officer made me feel worse than ever. "The Chinese just started a heavy barrage," he announced. "The MLR should be attacked tonight."

I went to my bunker quarters, angry and frustrated. I'm no hero, but the way I figured it, I was being paid to fight. Playing around with glossy portraits of Korean mountains wasn't my idea of fighting!

But orders are orders. I went out the next morning—and the next. I flew missions for the next three weeks. My findings? Except for an occasional lone mortar or supply truck—nothing.

In the meantime, the line companies were fighting hard. The Reds were attacking, and paying high prices for the privilege. Reports received at the CP told of 200 enemy killed by one company, 150 by another, 250 by yet another.

Me? The only enemy I saw were the mosquitoes and gnats that flew into my bunker.

Our MLR had been taking a heavy pasting from Chinese artillery for three or four days. It was April 14, and I rolled out of the sack reluctantly for another flight.

Blood Bath For the 17th

Continued from page 15

Our two L-19's circled the strip and then headed north. It was 0645 and the front was much more active than usual. Deadly bursts rocked both friendly and enemy hillsides.

"Look at the flak!" Beatty shouted.

There was plenty of it. I estimated the ack-ack to be fast-firing small 37 MM stuff, but a single shell could blow our frail kite into a million pieces.

Our plane was unarmed. I carried nothing but the .45 automatic strapped to my waist. I had to sit in the rear seat and watch. I couldn't even fight back!

I noticed some suspicious changes in certain sections of the terrain—changes that had been made during the night. They showed up along the Red MLR directly opposite positions held by the 17th Infantry Regiment—the Buffaloes.

"Shoot the whole sector," I radioed the photog in the second plane.

Beatty, of course, listened in on the conversation. He shoved the stick forward. We started down. He took the L-19 as far as he dared and we clipped the weeds growing on the Chinese MLR. What I saw wasn't good.

The Chinese appeared to be building up. Some of the earth was freshly dug by tank treads. There were more trucks on the roads than I'd seen before.

THE Commies didn't appreciate our nosiness. Heavy small arms and automatic weapons fire came up to meet us. There were several near hits from the 37's and the plane rocked.

"I've got everything!" the cameraman radioed. We bugged out and flew south along the Chorwon Valley.

For the first time, I felt a pulse of excitement while I waited for the films to be run through. The lab chief rushed them to me.

I flattened the prints on the table in the Ops shack. I put my glasses on them—and saw the worst! I snatched up the photos and ran for my jeep.

"G-3!" I ordered the driver. The division intelligence and plans officers listened to me for a few seconds. Then one of them grabbed a field phone.

"Find the 'Six'—quick!" he barked. "The Six" was the code designation for the Seventh Division commander.

"General!" he shouted. "Captain Arthur's found a big Red buildup in front of the 17th!" the staff officer said when he reached the Old Man. "They've brought in tanks, self-propelled guns, new mortars!"

Moments later, I was the center of attraction for more generals and colonels than I'd seen in one place for a long time. I laid out the photographs and held my stereoscope glasses so all could see.

"There—behind Porkchop," I point-

ed, "is a company of tanks. To the right—masked by T-Bone Hill—is another company, plus 76 and 152 MM SP guns."

Then the headquarters seemed to explode. The Old Man began issuing orders and the generals and colonels snapped to work.

"Alert the 17th—most of that buildup's in front of Lieutenant Colonel Snow's battalion . . . make sure he's notified . . . get me air liaison . . . pass the word to artillery and corps . . ."

The general was calling the plays like a sports announcer describing a fast-moving fight. The artillery officer grabbed one phone, the G-3 another. Someone was chopping his gums at the Air Force. Someone else was bulling his way through the switchboards to reach the 17th Infantry.

FOR a while, I was completely forgotten, I backed away from the ordered melee and sat on an upended ammo crate in a far corner.

Suddenly: "Arthur! Captain!" I came out of my improvised easy chair as though I'd been shot. It was the Old Man himself.

"Yes, sir!"

"I've heard a lot of stories about you," the division commander growled. "You're always complaining about being stuck in your job. Now I'm going to shove you up front. Take your jeep—and join Colonel Snow's battalion—for the day . . ."

I didn't get it—but didn't argue, either. I told my driver what I'd been ordered to do. He shrugged and wheeled the jeep north. I reported in to Colonel Snow's battalion.

"You're to go on to the observation post," one of the officers on duty informed me. Colonel Snow's expecting you."

I got there—by jeep and by foot.

"Right over here, lad," the commander of the Buffaloes' battalion said. He indicated a spot in the forward wall of the OP bunker. "It's all yours."

I was standing in front of a picture window overlooking the Chorwon Valley and its tangle of bomb-blasted hills.

In the distance, artillery thudded and roared. The rattle of machine guns could be heard at intervals. I glanced at my watch. It was 1153. I didn't understand what I was there for—or what I was expected to do. Colonel Snow noticed me checking the time.

"You've got a few minutes," he grinned. "We're pulling the plug at 1200."

AFTER what seemed an unduly long time, Colonel Snow began a count and the bunker grew quiet. Those who were near embrasures or firing ports crowded up to them.

"Ten seconds . . ."

I stuck my face into the opening.

"Seven . . ."

The tension mounted.

"Three . . . two . . ."

Snow's "One" was lost in the terrible thunder that broke at that instant. Behind us, a dozen battalions of artillery ranging from 105's to huge 240's un-

(Continued on page 50)

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leashed a roar. The air was filled with the rushing roar of shells.

The blasting went on. The artillerymen were firing their weapons as fast as they could ram fresh loads into the tubes and yank their lanyards.

The first salvo hadn't fallen before the second and third ones were on the way!

The enemy-held hills and valleys virtually disappeared in great fountains of blasting, flaming death. The Chinese MLR turned into a sea of smoke and fire and dust.

The earth shook. The murderous barrage went on and on in a boiling crescendo of sound. For 30 minutes, cannon and mortars fired without letup. Many thousands of shells crashed into the Communist positions in that half hour. The tidal wave of death clawed and battered the enemy.

And then it stopped. Just like that. I turned away from the embrasure, slowly, my eyes wide and only partly believing.

"Keep looking, son," Colonel Snow shouted. "It's only beginning."

A NEW kind of roar rolled out of the sky. It was at once high-pitched and heavy and it shook the heavens . . .

They came out of the sun, streaking down on the Reds at incredible speeds. There were a dozen F-86's, flashing silver blurs. They lanced down, the blast of their rockets sharp and hard against the chattering background of the 50's in the wings.

The deep, tearing belch of 500-pound bombs added to the infernal racket of the holocaust.

More F-86's followed. Then slower F-51's raked and chopped the enemy with more rockets and heavy machine gun fire. A flight of B-26's droned in from the East. Their bomb bays were open and the fat 1,000-pounders tumbled out.

The carnage ceased at 1310 hours—an hour and ten minutes after it began. The Chinese MLR was a smoking, crushed wasteland.

I went back to my jeep on shaky pins. The magnitude of the combined attack had been more—far more—than I could have imagined. I was glad—damn glad—that I'd been watching it instead of being on the receiving end!

The Signal Corps had aerial damage assessment photos of the sector ready by the time I arrived back at headquarters. A staff meeting was called.

"The tanks and the SP weapons are entirely wiped out," the Old Man informed us. "A conservative estimate gives the number of Chinese killed as 1,000."

The general nailed me after the meeting was over.

"Well, Arthur?" he grunted. "Still think your job is useless? Or do you imagine you could do more damage as a company commander?"

I found myself grinning right into the Old Man's face. All of a sudden, I didn't feel angry or resentful or frustrated any more. After all, there was a hell of a lot more to this photography business than met the eye. ***



Novarro

the Tiger

Continued from page 25

the boy handsomely for the cigarette, "so I daren't carry a pack myself."

He had plenty of money and was not afraid to spend it. One day he told the barman at the George V that he had decided to move to the Riviera. It was July and most of the "haute monde" had already left Paris for the summer. In Cannes, Nice and Monte Carlo he knew he would find all the Texas millionaires, the rich French businessmen, and the escapees from Britain's onerous tax system. These were the people who could help him with his income problems.

The barman was delighted to help and called his friend Jules, head barman at the Carlton in Cannes. "I'm sending you a character we have had here: Novarro. Fine type; plenty of dough." Jules was delighted, too, for although Jules was happy to have people like the Windsors and King Farouk, who would spend some of their casino winnings at his bar, the season had been a bit dull. He settled back to welcome the new saviour.

SO Novarro, with his Paris reputation of inexhaustible wealth, descended on Cannes somewhat nervously. He had comparatively little money left—a mere 35 million francs, or about \$100,000. He arrived on the Cannes beach where Jack Warner, Freddy McAvoy, Judy Garland, Jimmy Donahue and a dozen other less distinguished international socialites were already stretched out in the sun. Novarro, whose real name was Abraham Skorkowski, was also known as "Kid Tiger," and the Tiger was on the prowl.

It was during the summer of 1951 that Novarro made his contact with Farouk, who was then King of Egypt. At that time Farouk and his entourage were taking up the whole first floor of the Carlton. He and Novarro hit it off together right from the first. But there couldn't have been a more peculiar-looking pair. Farouk was fat, with little eyes and soft, pulpy hands. Novarro was thin and emaciated, with a small moustache and scars all over his body.

King Farouk found rich commoner Novarro more colorful than some of his other playmates at the roulette tables, so they became fast friends. Perhaps it was the role of repentant gangster that Novarro then began to play that attracted the king, or perhaps he thought the ugly millionaire could easily be parted from some of his cash at baccarat. The little swindler, who was a consummate actor, told Farouk that he had once been Al Capone's lieutenant, and that he had been very chummy with Jack "Legs" Diamond. The king apparently fell for this.

(Continued on page 52)

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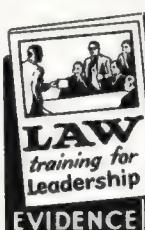
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Novarro, of course, reveled in the protection of a reigning monarch who loved to gamble. The fact that he was a friend of Farouk's opened all doors to him, including those of the most exclusive clubs, and increased the scope of his possible activities a hundred-fold. He was with Farouk for long nights at the baccarat tables, where they were often the first to arrive and the last to leave. Usually, Novarro's pockets were filled. During the day, Novarro would take part in the Cannes social season. For instance, he helped to elect the local beauty queen, Miss Palm Beach Casino.

That beauty queen election also was the occasion of Novarro's biggest recorded gambling loss. Whether it was the sun that affected him, or an overdose of beautiful dollies in "bikinis" that blinded his usually astute gambling instinct, that night he dropped 82,000,000 francs at *tout va* (anything goes). He did not seem to mind too much, but joked about it as though he had only lost a few thousand francs.

HE recouped some of this loss a few days later when he sat down in the Palm Beach Casino, where he played poker with Farouk and took all of the king's money. But in spite of this fairly moderate success, he began to lose large sums in other places.

He got to work on a few sideline swindles to recoup his bankroll. For example, rich foreigners who wanted to get a black market rate on \$100,000, say, would come to Novarro. He would tell them to transfer whatever sum they wanted to his account in a Swiss bank, "and when they tell me it is there, I will give you the equivalent here in francs."

The only trouble was, Novarro would not pay up. Or he would give the victim only part of the money and promise the rest later. There was nothing they could do against Novarro, for the whole transaction was illegal.

After a winter in Paris, Novarro went back to Cannes the next year, 1952, but Farouk was no longer there—and no

longer king. Things puttered along not too promisingly until he found a professional gambler with whom he played a fast game of poker. They played in the lobby of the Carlton itself, for the Tiger had no stomach left for the Palm Beach Casino tables and high society had begun to snub him anyway. The game lasted until four in the morning, with Novarro becoming the loser and getting grimmer and paler every half hour, while his opponent sat stolidly and raked in the I.O.U.'s. According to Jules, the barman, Novarro started out by winning a million and a half francs, then lost them and two million more.

Finally he gave up. "See me in the morning," he told the gambler, "I'll pay you then." When the gambler arrived the next day, Novarro's villa was empty.

It was later that same day, January 13, 1953, that a big black Packard pulled up at Annemasse on the Swiss frontier, towing a squat, two-wheeled trailer. While the chauffeur silently checked the tires, a small, thin man squeezed as far back in the cushions as he could, sitting on a small black bag like a hen on eggs, shoving his passport at the inquisitive French customs man. Novarro was a superstitious crook, and the date bothered him.

He was right to be superstitious. The customs inspector looked at the document and then back at Novarro. "Your passport is not exactly in order, sir."

Inspection revealed that Novarro was by no means a pauper. The precious bag contained several million francs in currency. In the car and trailer, the police found 300 million francs' worth of jewels, 25 suitcases with dozens of fine suits and enough other clothing to take care of a normal millionaire for a lifetime.

"This is scandalous," blustered Novarro, "I am a citizen, going peacefully to Switzerland for my health."

The police, however, tipped off by the games section of the famed French Surete National, could pin nothing directly on him. He had only run out on a gambling debt.

He was kept in Annemasse for 17 days under protective surveillance, during which time he was allowed to go to the

Megeve Casino nearby to gamble. He told the police that he had a reserve account in a Zurich bank worth over \$2,400,000. The bank refused to confirm it, since all Swiss bank accounts are secret, but it did not deny it either. (The police believe Novarro does have a tidy hoard in Switzerland under one more of his aliases.)

The Annemasse jug was not by any means the only one Novarro had seen the inside of, nor were the Annemasse police the only ones to know about the man. The world-famous International Criminal Police Commission, or *Interpol*, already had him on their books as a globe-trotting con man, and there is not much he can get away with without their knowing about it. The first time this organization heard about him was when he was 18 years old, in 1912.

Antonio, or Kid Tiger, or Alexandre Romanoff, or The Chicago Kid, or El Dragon Humano, or Duke de Braganza, or The Frog Man, or whichever of the dozens of aliases—mainly variations on his three-name Spanish handle—you want to call him by, was born Abraham Szkowski in Radomsk, Poland, in 1892. At 15 his career began bizarrely enough with a job as contortionist in Barnum & Bailey's Circus. How he got to the U.S.A. is one of the early mysteries. After the circus, he spent two and a half years in the Orpheum vaudeville circuit. In 1911 he went to Cuba with Orpheum, and there he probably picked up some of his bad habits and convincing patter, along with his first Spanish passport and fluent Spanish.

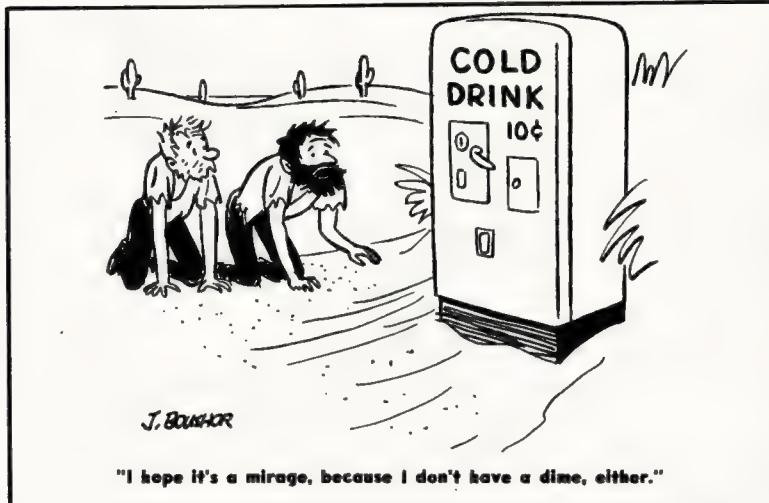
The first time the police became aware of him was when he was 18 years old.

AT that time, as Charles Ladaux, he got a sentence of 130 days in Havana for various swindles. From that time on, his story has been one long "in again out again Finnegan" regarding jails, and the dope on him is well known in a score of world capitals. The Tiger is a great traveler, and has seen the insides of the best pokeys in three continents.

In 1913 he was put away for four years in Cuba for passing phony dollar bills. In 1918, having passed a comfortable World War One in a Cuban jail, he was condemned again for passing counterfeit money. Then he went to San Diego, California, and bingo! Jail for falsification of passport.

Police have him listed as jailed for thievery in Los Angeles in 1923. Records show that he seems to have made a small fortune there as a bootlegger during Prohibition. In fact, it was on the savings from his rum-runner days that the police think he set himself up in international society.

After Los Angeles, his next stop was Lisbon, Portugal, where he was jailed for illegal entry in 1934. Then, in Zurich, jail again on a Swiss concept of illegality, "doubtful means of existence." In 1935 he was put away in Vienna for swindles; back in Lausanne, Switzerland, he was jugged for usurpation of identity in 1936. In Danzig, in 1927, they got him for "crookery."





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One look at his green eyes, and women forget how small and frail he is.

(Continued from page 52)

After that his trail again led to the United States and became somewhat fogged up with various comings and goings to Canada. Upon being arrested in Montreal in 1939 on vagrancy charges, the Canadian police tried to deport him, but could find no country willing to take him in. So they let him off on parole.

In February, 1940, while he was stuck in Canada, two of his American gangster friends are reported to have crossed the frontier to pay him \$21,000. "Whether this was hush money or a payoff for some bigger deal he had helped them swing is not known. But it did give him the capital for a profitable new sideline and the first of his rare partnerships with women.

He started a blackmail racket with two American ladies of leisure. These girls he used in the classic way. Well-to-do Montreal citizens, introduced to them on "friendly" terms, would suddenly find themselves being photographed in compromising situations with Novarro's girls. The wealthy suckers would pay up or be exposed.

On Sundays, Novarro's day off from the blackmail business, he would hie himself to the racetracks to bet and look for more victims. He could not keep away from gambling for long. In his spare time he found a rich French-Canadian official who liked poker. The Tiger talked him into a friendly game. At the end of a two-month friendship, Novarro was richer by another \$50,000.

Ever since that time, Novarro has lived like a king. It is as a Spanish nobleman that he most prefers to be known.

Novarro claims royal blood as "Count Alex Novarro" of Spain. With his silver tongue—and perhaps some hard cash—he has managed to persuade various gullible Spaniards that this claim is reasonably well founded, for he has obtained Spanish passports. The ironic part about his Spanish nationality claim is that his adopted motherland is the one country he has never been able to visit, for all his Spanish passports have been counterfeit and the Spanish police would have him in jail the moment he landed there. The Spanish, however, finally have sent out a call to withdraw the passport when next he showed up with it for renewal.

Apparently this news reached his ears and scared him off, for the latest word about him is that he is a Brazilian citizen. Although the Brazilians may not yet know it, the "King of the Brazilian Iron Industry," millionaire philanthropist and do-gooder, has descended upon them in all his glory—for that is the latest personality Novarro has decided to take, but under what name the police have yet to learn.

Novarro has told newspapermen that he is a South American philanthropist, with most of his fortune invested in iron mines. In fact, he once claimed to be the biggest man in Brazilian iron, as well as owner of large quantities of Royal

Dutch Shell oil stocks in Brazil. Among his other South American holdings, Novarro listed the motion picture industry in Montevideo, Uruguay mines in San Diego, Chile, and huge coffee plantations in Brazil. If his claims are true, and the police think they may be, South America is the only place in which Novarro has any money invested. He says he also supports orphan homes, "because I love children."

As far as the authorities know, however, mines, orphans, and even his alleged former life in Brazil are all figments of Novarro's colorful imagination, although it is probably true that he has some investments in the country. The police do not think he can still be as wealthy as he was when he came back to France in 1951, because he has lost so much in gambling.

The Tiger is believed to have gone into semi-retirement, still adding to his income by what he manages to con from unsuspecting people. In his youth, Novarro used to mark cards, but it is now thought that he plays cards fairly straight and merely to amuse himself. One of his sources of income is illegal money exchange. In the past this brought him considerable sums, partly because he sometimes mulcted his confidants of their dough by simply not paying them.

There is an unconfirmed story going the rounds in France that in 1946 Novarro laid the foundation of the fortune that has permitted him to live high, wide and handsome ever since. In June of that year Novarro is rumored to have pulled the biggest coup of his life, on the proceeds of which he came to Europe six years later to become the king of the gaming tables. Interpol, Scotland Yard and other interested parties are skeptical. What is known is that just after his Canadian blackmailing epoch in 1940, the Tiger was nabbed by the FBI in Miami, Florida. He was just passing through after having deposited 120,000 American dollars in a Toronto bank. Where, the FBI wanted to know, did the \$120,000 come from?

NOVARRO, then the Duke de Braganza, said he borrowed it from a Washington friend. The Washington friend had another story. The duke had told him that he had large sums stashed away in safe-deposit boxes that he could not get at because the U.S. Treasury department was after him for tax evasion. The names of these banks and the combinations of the boxes were all listed in code in the duke's old family Bible. "Here," said the duke, giving the Washington sucker the Bible, "as proof of my sincerity, run a hot iron over one or two of its pages."

Lo and behold, names and numbers written in invisible ink appeared between the lines. The book was obviously worth a mint, and to the Washingtonian, the duke parted with it for \$120,000—a little advance of 10 percent on what Novarro claimed was in the safe-deposit

boxes. The only trouble was, the Bible was not an heirloom, and the invisible writing turned out to be gobbledegook.

The man turned the duke in to the FBI. Because of some extradition problem, they could not hold him.

The experience with the FBI seems to have convinced Novarro to avoid the United States in the future, for he has not been back here since 1946. In spite of his Canadian difficulties he asked, in 1945, to be naturalized a Canadian citizen, but the Canadians turned him down. After his Miami arrest the next year, traces of Novarro were found in the Netherlands Indies from which he was expelled, and from where he returned to Cuba, then Rio, Rome, Switzerland, and finally the George V lobby in Paris.

ALTHOUGH he frequently used the story he had been an intimate of Al Capone, the truth was slightly less romantic. It is certain that he knew Capone and Legs Diamond, but only in the same way dozens of other racketeers and bootleggers did. He was never the beloved disciple of the big-shots that he pretended to be. Actually the big gangsters were much too tough for the likes of Novarro, for he was not a violent type at all, and there is no record of violence connected with him.

Small and thin, his head and his hands have a drawn, emaciated look that emphasizes the green hypnotism of his eyes and the green blarney of his tongue. He is always very well dressed; keeping himself spick and span seems to have become a mania with him in recent years. It is the opinion of some of the latest police inspectors that have interviewed him that he has decided to quiet down and to live as near to the right side of the law as possible.

With his ability to talk amusingly and convincingly about his alleged fortune, it is probable that Novarro really will settle down to a life of true retirement. Recently he has been careful with his money, and has tried to stay out of trouble. However, unless he can get away with being a "Brazilian," he is doomed to a nomad's life for a long time to come. He will not be allowed back in France, and he is "persona non grata" in too many of his favorite European countries to be able to return.

Antonio Novarro Fernandez has two alternatives for the remainder of his mysterious life: He can live in comparative quiet, security and comfort on his savings, if he really has any, for there are no specific criminal charges out against him today. Or, with his long, slim, "millionaire's hands," his engaging smile and his revival-meeting persuasiveness, he may find it impossible to abstain from looking for new suckers, and he may end up by risking an equally quiet life's end in some new jail.

In any case, Kid Tiger is "well cornered," as the French police put it. He cannot get away with much any more, anywhere in the world. ***

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warped-linoleum tenement where she spent her childhood—and wonder where the years have gone.

I'm a newspaperman, and some of my best friends are prostitutes. So I know a lot about Candy Collins and her rotating roster of leggy, lovely, \$100-a-night call girl employees.

I know some of Candy's employers, too. Not all of them. But I'm just as happy. When a newspaperman knows too much about the underworld kings and their kingdoms, there's always the chance he'll wind up in a cemetery or hospital.

But Candy's operation I know well. Headquarters is a compact but smartly-furnished office on the mezzanine floor of the Pymbrook Hotel for Ladies. It's just one of scores of legitimate properties in businesses like real estate, trucking and manufacturing in which underworld money has been invested.

The Pymbrook lobby is as dignified as stone columns, crystal chandeliers, and dark-stained walnut paneling can make it. Its chairs are generally full of wealthy widows waiting for the doorman to bring them the word that the chauffeur has drawn the limousine to the front entrance.

But here and there are slim, chic career girls. Models carrying their trademark—the hatbox. Crisp and eager small-town girls—deposited here with trepidation and tears by their parents, when they insisted on trying to crash show-business.

And at the first stop of the ornate brass-gated old elevator, you turn left and down the hall to a door, with the gold gilt lettering, "CANDICE R. COLLINS—PRESIDENT, COLLINS BUSINESS SERVICE." The service isn't specified, but it's rendered to tired businessmen.

CANDY has no trouble hiring help. That's one important reason for the Pymbrook office. It's where most of the recruiting is done. When a would-be starlet gets behind in her rent, she's referred to Candy who suggests, after feeling out the individual carefully, "that an easy way to pay is available."

"You can stay on at the hotel in the meantime," she says kindly. "I'll arrange for your arrears to be taken care of. If you should get that big break in the next two weeks—wonderful. You'll be able to pay your bill in a routine way. Or, if you prefer, you can notify the family to pay and go back home. *But*, if the big break doesn't come, or you'd rather not go home, just come back and see me in two weeks."

The break rarely comes. Rather than face the shame of admitting the Big Town beat them—just as every one back

Blonde Who Runs the Syndicate

Continued from page 13

home predicted it would—the girls often do go back to Candy. It seems like the best way out.

But this hadn't always seemed the best way out to Candy.

She'd seen girls follow that way, of course, since she was a kid. The part of town in which we grew up graduates almost as many \$5 girls every year as it does high school kids. You know the kind of neighborhood I mean. Every big city has one. It has a saloon for every six people—and a hock shop for every saloon. The streets were our playgrounds. Gutter dirt and open hydrants were our Riviera.

I say "our" because I lived in the tenement flat directly below hers. My family lived on the fifth floor. Candy and her older brother Bill lived with an aunt and uncle's family on the sixth.

Bill—he was killed in the Pacific during the war—was my best buddy. I remember when we were kids we'd send big important code messages back and forth on the dumb waiter. And when I wanted to go up to play cards with him on a rainy day, I'd rap three times with a broom handle on the plaster-cracked ceiling.

When we were old enough, we went down to enlist together. They took Bill. But I had a broken eardrum I didn't know about. So then we got split up. Night before Bill left, we had a farewell party for him. Five or six cases of beer, a big cake Candy baked, the works. Candy was only 14 then, but she was pert as a picture. She'd ripened early and her sweater emphasized her lush figure.

Bill took me aside. He looked a little worried. "Dick," he said, "I'm not gonna be able to take care of the kid where I'm goin'. I sure wish you'd keep your eye on her."

I did, too. If she was invited to a Cellar Club party, I made sure I was there. Once when one of the guys got hold of some weed, and everybody was taking drags, I managed to duck hers, and substitute a Camel.

When the drinks were poured I'd make sure that after the first one, hers were straight ginger ale.

She wouldn't always go along with me. Sometimes she'd call out, "Dick, you left out the magic ingredient." And red-faced, I'd have to pour in the Early Times and apologize.

Those nights she was generally with someone she liked. Giggling, cheeks flushed with excitement, she'd arm-in-arm from the living room into what the boys called the loving room—a room lined with couches and settees.

I worried the most those nights, and made plenty of excuses—which annoyed my own dates no end—to keep walking through the romance room. Once Candy

looked up coolly after my fourth trip through and grinned, "Dick, if I need a shadow, I'll call Pinkerton."

I don't know what Candy did with those guys. I know one or two of the loud-mouths bragged, but I didn't put much stock in that. I figured anyone would keep his mouth shut to keep a good thing like Candy to himself. Anyway, I ran interference as well as I could. Even got a few switch-blade slashes when I took on a couple of pegpants who tried to double-team her one night.

The gang had had a party, and I left the club thinking everyone had gone. I heard hard muffled voices, and then a girl's voice, shrill with fright. Candy's voice. I didn't waste any time. I broke through the living room, shoved the door open, caught a quick look at Candy pinned down by the bigger of the two. The other guy, Slim, had the neck of a bourbon bottle tilted to his lips.

I hit him like a ton of steel ingots. The bottle skidded across the room and fell there. He did too. The other guy wasn't as easy. His knife got to me before I got to him. The floor was splashed with blood—mine from his slicing, his from a very bloody nose—before I finally got her out of there.

You had to hand it to her though. She was cool. "Going to any more cellar club parties?" I asked when I got my breath.

"Probably will," she said, smoothing her dress and straightening her hair. "Can't keep my nose buried in books all the time. But I'll pick my dates a little more carefully."

I took her out myself a few times. But to me she was still Bill's kid sister. And when my dad tagged a better job and the family moved to Suburbia and I started college, I didn't see her any more.

A few years later, she did invite me to a very important Saturday morning in June, though. Then, elated and ecstatic in spite of the fact that her high heels threatened to snag in her long black graduation gown and trip her in front of 900 people, she stepped gingerly down the stairs of the auditorium stage, high school diploma with honors held in a slightly clammy palm.

That day the world was her oyster. It wasn't till she bought the *Sunday Times* and began combing Section Nine for a job, that she realized the oyster-shell might be just a little hard to crack. There weren't many positions a diploma qualified her for. But finally under "SALES HELP—FEMALE" she found there were plenty of jobs.

Candy pressed her best slim skirt and cotton blouse that night, and set her alarm for seven A.M. When it rang, she felt grown up for the first time in her life. And she got the job—not much of a job, 67 and-a-half cents an hour, but she was very proud just the same.

It was one of the better stores in the city. Candy worked in the perfume department, and she found quickly that she had as many men customers as women. It seemed to be the place they always came to when they couldn't think of a present for their wives, their girlfriends—"Or," said her red-haired co-worker

pretty Kathy Weber, "their mistresses."

Kathy was a hungry little redhead. She too wanted furs, perfumes and \$300 tailored suits, and working in department stores, she said, was not the way girls got such things.

Kathy found a better way. And within a month, of the day she quit, she was back at the perfume counter—in a floppy hat that must have cost her \$25, and an afternoon dress right out of *Vogue*. She bought an ounce of "Joy" at \$50 per, paid for it with a \$100 bill, and bursting with a secret she had to share, said she'd buy Candy lunch. As soon as she'd come back from a visit to the fur salon, that is.

Candy is not naive. By the time Kathy got back, she'd eliminated rich uncles dying (nobody collects on a will that fast), murder for insurance (Kathy wasn't married), and sweepstakes ticket coming in (this was the wrong season). She was spelling "prostitute" to herself, and wondering how a girl could do such a thing just for money, when Kathy strutted up in a stone-marten stole.

KATHY took her to lunch often after that, and each time the clothes got better, and the jewelry collection more extensive. Candy began to understand—and, as she pressed the same \$8.98 cheap cotton dresses in the same drab, silverfish-infested apartment, she wondered who was right. She or the redhead.

Kathy invited Candy to parties. But because of her embarrassment over the clothes she didn't have, Candy made excuses. She had started night college. So she blamed studying that couldn't be postponed, a term paper to finish, headaches. But finally, one day, when Kathy offered to lend her an outfit, she accepted. And she found the world of \$30 hats, \$50 shoes, and \$100 girls was a dazzling one indeed. That made up her mind. She had a long talk with Kathy that night—at her East Side apartment—and Candy decided her own standards were old-fashioned, needed a little modernizing. This was the life. Weekends at swank shore clubs in the summer. Trips to Miami in the winter.

She didn't want to leave school though. Still wanted that college degree and had plenty of brains to get it easily.

But now she could get it faster. Now her "work" was at night. She could attend school by day. She continued to take her studies seriously, spent extra hours in the library, ignored the bold and the shy requests for dates by dozens of students.

But then one night she rang a bell outside a plush hotel suite. The door opened, and there in a lounging robe, with champagne cooling in an ice bucket behind him, was a sharp-nosed, but ruggedly handsome ex-Marine from one of the city's best families. He had slipped her mash notes in chem class, and asked for dates every single day without fail after class.

At the door, he was as surprised and flustered as she, and at first thought she was ringing the wrong bell. Humiliated, ashamed, she hoped she was. She checked the card in her purse. This was the room. He had closed the door reluctantly and



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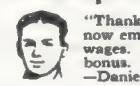
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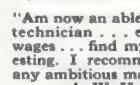
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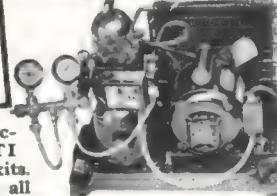


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He reached out and savagely ripped open her dress. "Nothin' can help you, beautiful."

gone back inside. It was her decision. Her brain seething, she made it. Business was business. She rang the bell again. She entered the room, and let him help her off with her coat. She could feel his hand tremble a little.

"I didn't think marines scared this easily," she said.

"Candy," he said. "I had no idea. Look, we can call off the whole deal. I..."

"That's all right," she said. "I wouldn't be here if I didn't want to be." Candy tilted his head forward, gave him a long kiss. Then she sat down, her smooth nylon-clad legs crossed coquettishly. "How about that champagne over there?" she said. "Let's drink a toast to tonight." This was significant. After that night, Candy no longer had qualms. In the name of business she could do anything.

And it changed her life in one other way, too. She never went back to school again.

Candy did continue her education though—as a syndicate girl—the syndicate that controls all the important gambling, dope-traffic and prostitution in every part of this country, including the elite \$100 call girls of cities like New York, Los Angeles, Miami, Washington and Las Vegas. She's had some wild experiences.

The most frightening happened when a bunch of young hoods decided to have some fun.

One of the gang had an older sister who, like Candy, worked for the syndicate. He visited her apartment and, while she was taking a shower, went through her address book, and found the office number.

They rented a room for a night at one of the better hotels and then called the office number. "I'm from the West," the spokesman said. "I'd like to arrange a little engagement tonight with one of your girls. I'm in room 1805 of the Sands Towers."

CANDY drew the unlucky number. When she arrived at the door, she rang, and waited.

The door opened on a tough-looking muscular young man of 17 or 18. Behind him, Candy could see several other hard-looking youths sprawled around on couches and chairs, with highballs or cigarettes in their hand. "Excuse me," she said, "I must have the wrong room." She turned to go.

When he saw Candy's low-cut dress, the guy's eyes had lit up like 100-watt bulbs. His hard hand snapped out and grasped her wrist. "This is the place all right, beautiful," the punk said hungrily. He clamped a calloused hand over her mouth, and forced her into the room.

A door opened and another eight or nine peg-trousered, leather-jacketed characters poured out of the bath-room. She felt naked and dirty. Unconsciously, she shrugged her neckline up a fraction of an inch.

The leader laughed in her face. "Come

on, beautiful," he said, "that's not gonna help." He placed his hands inside the neckline. "But this is!" He yanked. It tore neatly at the seam.

Tears burned Candy's eyes. She stood up and slapped at him wildly. Two hoods grabbed her arms. The spokesman, eyes blazing reached out and ripped again.

"All right," he said. "That's far enough now. You, beautiful, be smart, relax." He turned to the others.

"Just one more thing: I don't want this lady to think we'd want to deprive her of an honest living. Of course, 100 bucks is a little out of our price range. So we all chipped in"—he threw a wad of bills on the table—"and we managed to raise \$25. That's not bad money for an evening's work. Not bad at all." He pulled Candy to him.

"You're way ahead of yourself, punk!" said a harsh voice at the door. A pass key had turned in the lock, and two rough-looking men were standing there, pistols in hand. One threw Candy her coat. She wrapped it around her hastily. She started toward the door, then turned back to the dress-ripper and slapped him full across the face with all the fury and hate that was in her. Once, twice, and again. Then she left.

Behind her, she heard the door click, then lock. She stood there for a moment, lighting a cigarette with a wavering hand. Suddenly the noises began in the room. Dull, thudding noises, punctuated with hoarse cries of pain. The boys were being pistol-whipped one at a time by one hood, while the other covered them.

Candy left, sick to her stomach, grateful that help had come.

The Syndicate. Before I started to beat a typewriter for a living, I was one of the millions of Americans who believed names like Murder, Inc., and Crime, Inc., are invented by newspaper editors.

But they're as real as General Motors or AT&T. They hold board meetings at long mahogany tables, seated in polished leather chairs. Their "New Products" committees report on progress in fields like labor gangsterism. They assign territories just as carefully and methodically as Alcoa or Pittsburgh Paint. And they study sales reports from local syndicate

"executives" like Candy Collins just as thoroughly as the vice-president in charge of sales of General Electric does. They eliminate competition just as subtly.

There was an example of such an elimination in the newspapers not too long ago. No—not a gangland execution. That's to be deplored. Too messy, makes too many headlines.

This was handled with much greater finesse. An idle-but-not-yet-rich playboy, who wouldn't come into his money until some future date. He was a likeable, congenial guy; always ready to do favors. When friends or fraternity brothers came to town, he had made dates for them with beautiful women who were willing to be kind to dates who were kind to them.

This went on for several months. Then, strapped for cash, he realized suddenly that when he didn't find them a date, they plunked \$100 down elsewhere for a presentable professional. "Why," he asked himself, "shouldn't I get in on this easy money?" He knew plenty of showgirls and models who would cooperate. He had many friends who wanted what they had to offer. So, at the cost of losing a few highly indignant old friends, he went into business. His mistake: He didn't take out "insurance" in the right places.

The Syndicate got reports. Their investigative branch—three ex-detectives whose job it is to find out which closets the skeletons are hidden in—went to work. They made notes. They took names and addresses. They passed the notes and the addresses on to the DA's office. Quickly, completely, the competition folded. The amateur made the front pages. The professionals, once more, made the money.

CANDY'S girls do well in the money department themselves. This is one inducement when they "enlist." But candy Candy adds others. She rationalizes for them that, after all, the way to big money on the stage, in TV and movies is often through a "business introduction" to a producer. There have been many "success stories" among her girls.

Then, too, Candy's kids become intimate friends of the handsomest singing and acting idols in show business. To explain why, I refer you to a conversation I had with an old friend at a showbiz bar recently. "Well," I said, "you really made it big at last. First TV, then Broadway, then the Gold Coast. And you always went for the most beautiful women. I guess you have all you can handle now."

"Well," he said, "that's what everybody thinks. But to tell you the truth, I've got a solid career going now, and those scandal mags are always itching to rock the boat with a guy like me. So—I pay for my kicks. Except now I can afford the best."

The result is Candy's gals wind up with stars of TV, movies, and stage. And they're paid well for it, to boot. For a vulnerable bachelor star, the expensive



he sneered, "nothin'."

way is, in the long run, the least expensive.

There's little or no danger to health. Each month, the dolls check in at the syndicate doctor's office for the drawing of a few CC's of blood for an STS (Serological Test for Syphilis), and a 1.2 million-unit shot of bicillin, the long-acting penicillin that gives long-term protection against what doctor's euphemistically call "Cupid's Catarrh."

Prostitution as the "Business Service" operates it is fine as far as most of the girls are concerned. The hours leave plenty of time for schooling or sunbathing. The pay puts them in the top income brackets. They don't like to leave.

One Candy Collins beauty decided after a year she'd go back to Kentucky and marry her old boy friend. She got off the plane at Lexington Bluegrass Airport. But halfway home, driving past Clabber Girl baking powder signs painted on weather-beaten barns, seeing again the chicken houses with women scattering feed behind the wire fences, and fields of tobacco, she turned the car around. "I changed my mind," she said. "After life up here, I figured Billy and back home would be about as dull as a boll of cotton."

Candy's set-up—Syndicate protection or no—needs just one accident to buckle it like a bombed-out bridge. The accident almost happened one evening last year. All it took was one unexpected visit from a home-town boy who'd decided to marry his sweetheart no matter what she said.

But when she, contrite and touched, told him about the past year, he broke down and cried like a little boy. He walked out in a fog, and came back the next day with a gun.

"I can't take it," he cried. "I'm killing you and me both. No point in either of us living."

That, right then and there, could have been the end of the Candy Collins set-up. Something like that would have had editors dancing on their copy desks.

Fortunately for Candy—and the two kids—the girl had presence of mind and guts. "Jimmy," she said calmly, "I agree. I deserve to die. But let me look right. Let me brush my hair, fix my lipstick. I won't lock the door."

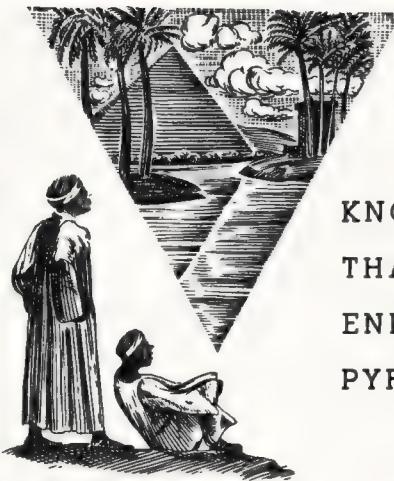
She went in, and in one minute was back in a sheer negligee. Hungrily, he swept her into his arms. Later on he didn't want to die any more. The problem was solved.

There'll be other problems. Candy will meet them all head-on. And that's good—because she's got a fine head on her shoulders. But she can't win them all.

And eventually, inevitably, there'll be the moment when she stands in court and hears a judge intone a sentence: "Three to five years for procurement."

Candy knows all this. She can't help but know it. So, as I say, in three weeks, she marks her tenth anniversary.

And somehow I get the feeling she wishes she had never ever seen her first ***



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Incident

at the Jawbone

Continued from page 41

and watched the swamper carry his load of dead soldiers to the Jawbone's cemetery. This cemetery was a gully nearly filled to the brim with broken empty bottles. The swamper set down his basket and started hurling his bottles with shattering impact into the sea of jagged glass.

Makay tired of watching the swamper and turned back into the saloon. When he drew even with the band platform he suddenly stopped and looked at the girl standing in front of the bar. She poured whiskey, lifted the glass and drank. Makay easily recognized Gladys Wendell, wife of Homer Wendell. Makay moved quietly up behind her and slid his arms around her, saying, "Fifty guesses."

Gladys twisted in the circle of his arms and faced him. When she saw who it was she chuckled deeply. She flicked her eyes toward the whiskey bottle. "I'm celebrating being a widow."

His eyes popped wide open. "Homer's dead?"

"He was shot when the bank was robbed last night."

Makay took his arms from around her. "Drag that across again, slow-like."

"Homer was shot last night when Chesseldine's outlaws robbed the Atlas Loan and Trust Company. Chesseldine cleaned out the bank. That slow enough?"

Makay whistled. His life savings had been in the bank. Then a puzzled frown crossed his forehead. "Was Homer one of the bandits?"

"No such luck. Homer, drunk as usual, just stumbled smack into a bullet."

Makay moved over to the bar. He filled the glass with whiskey, handed it to Gladys. She took a healthy sip and handed it back. Makay finished off the whiskey.

He wiped the back of his hand across his mouth, then asked, "What are you doing here?"

"Dan Hepburn gave me a job here at the Jawbone. I start tonight. Homer left nothing for me—except a whiskey bill here with Dan. So, I'm going to entertain at the Jawbone. Shall we have a drink on that?"

"We'll drink to that, Gladys. And we'll drink to my leaving town broke—thanks to Chesseldine."

"You're leaving town?"

The hard, bright anger came back to Makay's face. Into his mind surged the scene last night with old Buddenrock, owner of the big Wagonwheel spread. There had been no harsh words, just Buddenrock's simple statement that he had sold the Wagonwheel to a cattle syndicate—and that "maybe" the syndicate would keep on Makay as foreman.

To Gladys, he said, "I'm pushing off to some other range."

The very way in which he said it brooked all questions which leaped into

her mind. She murmured, "And you're going away—dead broke."

Gladys grabbed up the whiskey glass from which they both had drunk, and flung it with all her strength against the far wall.

The swamper, entering the barroom, let out a yell. "Ain't there enough mess around here?"

Makay put the palm of his left hand on the bar-top and vaulted over it to land lightly behind the bar. He took two fresh glasses and poured whiskey into the bottom of each glass.

Gladys said: "Set out one for Pop." She beckoned to the swamper. "We'll drink to a new day."

Makay pushed a drink each toward Pop and Gladys. They all emptied their glasses in silence.

Pop then smacked his lips. "Some doin's around here last night, Makay. Bank robbery pulled off in regular Jesse James style. Some say it was Chesseldine, some are not so sure. The riders were masked."

Makay stared moodily out at the bank building.

Pop helped himself to another shot of whiskey. "When Marshal Pollner got back here empty handed with his posse, he said the bandits scattered to hell and gone in the foothills."

Makay slowly fashioned wheatstraw paper around tobacco. He licked the cigarette and stuck it to his lower lip. "Anybody killed—besides Homer?"

"Nope," said the swamper. "Baldy Raines was night guard at the bank. He was found roped and gagged and with a bump the size of a melon on his head. He says he opened the back door to let his cat out, like he always does, and something hit him."

"That," murmured Makay, "is worth some thinking." He thumbed a match afame and lit his cigarette.

A group of riders clattered and chuffed up to the Jawbone hitchrack. Makay smoked in silence as he watched three riders come through the batwings. The fourth rider took up a position on the gallery.

The first rider through the swinging doors came in with a swift, arrogant stride. He was a tall, almost gaunt man. He had a long, straight nose, clear gray eyes and a military mustache. He had a Colt .44 strapped low on each leg. His gray eyes settled carefully on Makay.

As Makay met those eyes, a tension started to build in the now silent room. These two men, altogether different, were yet alike. They eyed each other warily, both knowing and sensing the power of the other.

The tension-taut air of the room was broken by Gladys' call to the gaunt man: "Hello, Chesseldine."

Makay stood quietly behind the bar. His two hands were resting on the top of the bar. He let them rest there, lightly and relaxed.

Chesseldine looked more closely at Gladys. Suddenly a quirk on the left side of his face lifted a corner of his mustache in an amused grin. "Gladys," he said. "Socorro, wasn't it?"

"You've called it, Chesseldine. The Blue Moon." She nodded toward Makay. "This is Makay of the Wagonwheel."

Chesseldine inclined his head briefly to Makay. Then he turned toward one of the riders who had come in with him, and said, with a courtly bow, "Miss Gladys, Mr. Makay—my daughter Rita."

Makay's eyes then left Chesseldine and flicked to the rider he had presented as his daughter. She was a pretty girl with jet-black hair curling the brim of her pushed-back Stetson. Her gray eyes were set far apart and her cheekbones were gently prominent. Her mouth was full. Makay found no fault at all with her too-tight shirt and tighter levis. The one angular note in her curves was the Colt .44 tied to her thigh. Her gray eyes were sizing up Makay with a detached coolness. Makay gazed with admiration until another body eclipsed the one he had been admiring.

This other body was that of the third rider who had come into the Jawbone. Makay heard Chesseldine say dryly, "Mr. Makay—Mr. Largo."

Largo was young, around the same age as Chesseldine's daughter—about 20. There was an air of restrained viciousness about him; a lurking, primitive force that seethed close to the surface. He wore two Peacemakers slung low and tied. He walked over to the bar which Makay stood behind and ordered.

"Whiskey for me."

Makay nodded toward the bottle. "I've been helping myself. You do likewise."

RITA Chesseldine hooked her thumbs in her shell belt and set herself to enjoy what was building. She winked at her father.

Gladys, laughing huskily, placed herself between Makay and Largo. She lifted the whiskey bottle. "I'll pour a round for the house."

Makay's left hand reached behind him for glasses on the back-bar.

Largo brushed against Gladys. "That's sure being neighborly." He patted her.

Makay's left fist, moving just the distance from the back-bar, struck Largo's jaw with a solid, meaty sound. Largo spun, falling, the side of his head bouncing against the flaring edge of the mahogany, and he dropped from Makay's view.

"Hold!"

Makay froze, saw that the guard on the gallery had his rifle poked through the batwings, dead center on Makay's chest.

A quirk of a smile again appeared on Chesseldine's hawk-like face. He called toward the batwings, "Largo asked for that, Utah." The rifle disappeared. Then Chesseldine's eyes moved toward his daughter. He winked.

She met his eyes rebelliously, saying nothing.

Chesseldine walked over and stood above Largo and watched him slowly come back to life. Largo scurried to a sitting position, his hands fastening on the butts of his Peacemakers. Chesseldine's boot pushed Largo back on the floor, held him there.

Because Chesseldine's eyes were hooded by his lids as he looked down at Largo, Makay could not see what was in them. But Largo could, evidently, and his hands slid away from his gun butts. Then Chesseldine removed his boot.

Largo climbed slowly to his feet. He looked across the bar to Makay, saying, "We're building quite a tally, Makay. We'll have to settle it soon."

Makay shrugged.

Largo accepted the whiskey from Gladys, let his fingers brush slowly over hers, then walked over to a table and sat down. For all the heed he paid the others, he might have been alone in the room.

Makay filled two glasses and came around the bar. He handed one to Chesseldine and nodded toward a table at one of the windows facing onto Hawkins Street. Both men crossed the barroom, faced each other and sat.

Rita Chesseldine went over and sat across from Largo. She said nothing as she flicked at a table leg with her quirt.

Gladys, left alone at the bar, drank her whiskey. Then she moved down the length of the bar and turned up onto the staircase.

Makay looked speculatively at Chesseldine, thinking about the empty bank across Hawkins Street. Chesseldine spoke:

"That's a fine rifle you have out front on the grulla horse. Are folks around here so honest that you can leave a gun like that in the street?"

"**N**O," said Makay. "Not that honest.

I figured only to stop here a moment before pulling out; then I heard about the excitement last night."

Chesseldine raised an inquisitive eyebrow. "Excitement?"

"Bank robbery, Chesseldine." Makay casually studied the smouldering tip of his wheatstraw. "Some folks think they recognized the bandit leader."

A flash of humor came to Chesseldine's face. "Me, no doubt."

Makay nodded, and let it go at that.

"Tell me something," said Chesseldine seriously. "If you were Chesseldine and you had a sack full of loot—wouldn't you be far into the hills by now?"

Makay shrugged. "Just making conversation."

Chesseldine thoughtfully smoked his cigar. "Anyone hurt?"

"Gladys' husband was killed."

"I'm truly sorry," said Chesseldine. "I used to know Gladys before she married. Fine girl."

Rita Chesseldine snorted. "Fine bum."

Chesseldine smiled indulgently. "Now, Rita."

The old swamper lifted another basket of empty bottles, carried them out to the

backyard. Soon they heard the intermittent crash of glass.

Chesseldine listened intently; then asked Makay, "Does he break each one?"

"You oughta see his glass garden out there. It's a death trap."

Chesseldine raised his eyes toward the rooms above. "Gladys doesn't act too be-reaved."

"Homer Wendell," said Makay, "wasn't one to bring out love in a girl."

Largo got to his feet, walked along the bar and pushed out through the bat-wings.

Rita came over to Makay's and her father's table and sat down. She gave her father a long, searching look, then turned her eyes on Makay, asking, "Did Gladys see Homer get shot down?"

"I don't rightly know if—"

She cut him off with: "Gladys is the one, Father!"

CHESSELDINE considered that for several moments as he sucked on his cigar. Then he shook his head slowly.

Rita raised her quirt and brought it down viciously on the table top. The glasses and bottle jumped. She got up from the table and stalked back to the one she had shared with Largo. She sat there with her stiff back to them.

Makay poured two drinks, said to Chesseldine, "I wish I knew what the hell was going on around here."

Largo came striding into the saloon and sat down with Rita, saying:

"Homer's dead all right."

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Makay swung hard. His fist stung when it crunched

From out behind the Jawbone saloon came the heavy explosion of a .45. Then a second shot. After that came the yelping of a dog in an indignant, injured and furious retreat.

Makay went quickly to the back door of the saloon. There, he saw Dan Hepburn, the owner of the Jawbone, slipping a .45 into his waistband. There, also, was the old swamper; fairly shaking with anger, sputtering:

"There was no damn reason to punch shots at that poor hound!"

Dan Hepburn was a tall, handsome, robust man, his thick black hair sleeked to his head with grease. On the sleeves of his white shirt were fancy ladies' garters which looked to Makay like a pair Gladys had been wearing recently.

Hepburn turned his head to the swamper "Keep your bill out of it. I feed that no-good mutt. If I want to sharpen my aim a mite, that's my business."

Head down, Hepburn picked his way carefully across the littered backyard so as not to scuff his boots.

Makay was frowning at Hepburn's shooting at the dog, when Hepburn raised his head and saw Makay and Chesseldine on the back steps.

Hepburn stared at Chesseldine, sucked in this breath.

Chesseldine's gaze was coldly mocking. "Well, if it isn't Dandy Dan Hepburn. Haven't seen you since Cemetery Sam O'Neil chased you out of Laredo with a broken bar mop." Chesseldine turned his back and walked into the saloon.

Hepburn followed at a distance and made his way behind the bar.

Chesseldine and Largo were now talking together at the bar. Three townsmen had come into the saloon and were standing at the mahogany in a tight, apprehensive little knot.

Makay moved over to where Rita was sitting alone at the table Largo had vacated.

"Miss Rita," he asked, "mind if I sit with you?"

The girl looked up, regarded him coolly. Makay felt the chill of her glance. He touched his hat and turned to walk on, saying, "Sorry I bothered you, ma'am."

RITA reached up to put a restraining hand on his arm. Somehow, though it was not intentional, their hands came together. Neither tried to pull away nor to consciously prolong the contact. Yet their hands stayed together. Their eyes sought each other in a puzzled stare, and then each of their hands released the other.

Rita's head tilted toward the vacant chair beside her.

In moving to take the chair, Makay saw Chesseldine looking at them. Chesseldine's face was quiet; there was now no suggestion of humor upon it. Makay turned his chair slightly so that he could keep both Chesseldine and Largo in range, and sat down.

Rita took her hat from her head, shook her hair out vigorously, letting it fall to her shoulders.

Makay said softly, "You should do that more often."

She ignored his compliment.

Makay's blood stirred as he drank in the nearness of her. The intensity of his eyes drew her attention back to him. He quickly dropped his eyes to the table. Her quirt lay on the table. He picked it up toyed with it.

She asked, conversationally, "Where you heading, Makay?"

Makay slowly rubbed one thumb over the smooth leather grip of Rita's quirt and considered her question. Finally, he



"On Dasher, on Dancer, come Prancer and Vixen!"

into Largo's jawbone.

spoke. "I haven't given it much thought. This urge to—uh—make a change came on me sud'en-like. I reckon, though, I'll slant for Montana. Never been there—guess that's why."

Rita's voice took on a note of derision. "And I suppose that you'll start a new life there at 40 a month and beans. That sure sounds exciting."

Makay studied her quietly. Excitement? Was that what kept her riding with her outlaw father? He said, "Forty a month would look mighty good to me right now. Miss Rita, I had money in the bank—but that's wiped out now."

Rita bit her lip. Her eyes fastened on Makay.

He said, "I've been thinking that the robbery backfired in some way. That's why Chesseldine is here in town." Then a thought hit Makay—a logical thought. "The bank money," he said slowly, "is still right here in town."

Rita's mouth drew into a tight line. She said nothing.

Largo's voice came from the bar: "Makay!" When Makay looked over, Largo asked, "How's about having a drink with the boss and me?"

Makay rose from his chair, unthinkingly tucking Rita's quirt under his left arm, and walked over to the bar.

Makay took up a position at the mahogany beside Chesseldine, signaled to old Pop for a drink. Dan Hepburn was up toward the front of the bar, looking out the window onto Main Street.

Makay laid Rita's quirt on the bar, the tassel of rawhide thongs hanging over the back edge. Makay suddenly saw the quirt slowly moving across the bar-top. He reached out and grasped the handle. The pull on the other end continued. Makay stood on the foot-rail, looked over and saw the hound dog sitting behind the bar, pulling playfully at the quirt.

Pop moved quickly over and took the thongs from the dog's teeth. "Sorry, Makay. This Blinker is just an overgrown pup."

MAKAY, still leaning over the bar, scratched the dog's head and got his hand licked in return. "Pop, is this the dog that was out back?"

Pop glared belligerently in Dan Hepburn's direction, then nodded.

Looking down along Blinker's back, Makay saw a groove matted with dried blood and hair which might have been made by a bullet burn. Makay's face grew hard. About to turn to Dan Hepburn, he heard Chesseldine say, "Makay, I've been talking to some town people. Nobody seems to have seen Homer as he was shot down."

"You know, Chesseldine," said Makay, "That's been puzzling me a heap, too. And the possibility occurred to me that maybe Homer was carrying the bank loot."

Largo said savagely, "What the hell do you know about that?"

"I was talking to Chesseldine," Makay

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Largo's Colt blasted two shots into the planking.

pointed out. "You keep your mouth out of it."

Chesseldine raised a remonstrating hand. "Gentlemen, please." Then he turned to Largo and said mildly, "You go outside and check Makay's warsack."

"I did," said Largo, obviously hoping Makay would make something out of it.

Makay grinned broadly, instead. "I take it you didn't find bank money stashed there." He then spoke to Chesseldine. "When the Wagonwheel boys hit town you will have to make a run for it. They're a salty bunch, and there'll be no payroll money in the bank. This town won't be a healthy place for anyone who even looks like an outlaw."

Chesseldine spread his hands and said with all sincerity, "I haven't got the money."

"That I know. I also know that the money is still in town somewhere."

Chesseldine regarded Makay humorously. "I was wondering when you would catch onto that. And I'm wondering why you told me about your Wagonwheel crew coming to town. It's not because you are worried about me."

"I was thinking about your daughter."

Chesseldine's glance flicked to Rita. Then he said, "We'll pull out."

Largo was fit to be tied. He stared unbelievingly at Chesseldine. "You mean you're gonna light out—without the money?" Without waiting for the answer, he swung to face Makay. "You know where that money is!" he accused thickly.

"Maybe I do," admitted Makay amiably.

Largo could constrain himself no longer. He reached for his right-hand gun.

Makay drew. He had instinctive, cat-like speed; his coordination and the fluidity of his shifting body and the blurring right hand was dexterity rarely seen even in this untamed cattle country.

But Chesseldine had his Colt out first and slammed off a shot at Makay with incredible, lightning-like speed.

Makay was conscious of Chesseldine's draw, and where Chesseldine was aiming. Before Makay even attempted to squeeze off a shot at Largo, knowing that Chesseldine's bullet would deflect his aim, Makay flung his own gun into the air in the famous and often suicidal border shift. Then Makay's left hand stabbed forward, plucked his gun out of the air, and shot Largo through the chest.

Even before Makay fired on Largo, he felt Chesseldine's bullet singe across the back of his right hand.

Largo's Peacemaker blasted two shots into the planking at his feet, then he followed the bullets to the floor. His chin hit the boards, with a bone-crushing impact. His fingernails rasped on the uneven flooring, vainly seeking a purchase to cling to life. He then lay still.

Dan Hepburn's voice trumpeted through the saloon: "Hold it! Dammit—hold everything!" He was standing on the bar, a sawed-off shotgun covering Chesseldine and Utah and Rita.

Gladys, as pert and pretty as ever, was standing on the bandstand with another scattergun aimed dead at Chesseldine. She called out pleasantly, "Stand hitched, Chess. I'd hate to let go at you."

Chesseldine slowly holstered his Colt.

Makay looked at Chesseldine and an understanding passed between them. They bent and picked up Largo's body and carried him back to a large table and placed him upon it. Makay looked down at the young-old face, no longer vicious or predatory. He placed Largo's hat over the dead face, saying softly, "He just wanted to be a big gunslinger. Maybe like you, I reckon."

BEFORE Chesseldine could answer, Utah called out, "Riders down the trail, boss. About a dozen of 'em."

Dan Hepburn roared, "It's the Wagon-wheel boys!"

Chesseldine faced Dan Hepburn. "Do we ride out, Dandy Dan—or do we try our luck here and now?"

Hepburn's eyes sought Makay. Makay nodded. Hepburn said quickly: "Ride out. Chesseldine."

Chesseldine nodded gravely to Makay. "It's been right nice knowing you, lad." He gestured to Utah and Rita. Utah followed him through the batwings.

The drumming of the hoofbeats of the oncoming Wagonwheel riders was now heard in the saloon.

Rita Chesseldine started for the door. She stopped, looked at Makay. She moved her mouth to speak, but the words met some constriction in her throat. Then she turned and raced toward the batwings.

Makay took three swift steps, stuck out his foot and tripped her. Rita fell headlong. Makay swooped down, pinned her to the floor.

Dan stomped back up the steps. "Rita! You comin'?"

Makay felt Rita tense under his hand. Her upper body rose from the floor. All Makay could see was the back of Rita's head as her thick hair tickled his chin.

Utah suddenly turned from the batwings and ran out across the gallery and clattered down the steps. His loud guffaw was heard. "Rita winked at me, boss. She's stayin'."

Whatever Chesseldine's reply might have been was lost in the churning hoofs of spurred horses.

Rita squirmed furiously. "That damned, loud-mouthed Utah!"

Makay lifted her bodily and held her firmly till she quieted. She looked at him warmly.

At that moment a wild sliding of horses in front of the Jawbone announced the arrival of the Wagonwheel crew. One of them rode his horse up the gallery steps and through the batwings into the saloon yelling, "Who were them jiggers what lit out?"

Dan Hepburn yelled back, "Chesseldine!"

The rider let out a whoop, turned his horse and crashed down the saloon steps. His shout. "That there is Chesseldine!"

Then he followed the bullets to the floor, his fingernails clawing up splinters.

touched off lusty rebel yells. The cavalcade stormed in the dusty wake of the outlaws.

Makay put his arm around Rita. "Your Dad had a fair start."

Rita's lips firmed in a tight smile. "Dad's been in tighter squeezes."

Hepburn ran out onto the gallery to watch the chase.

Makay took Rita over to the bar and spoke to the swamper in a low voice. "Pop, you mosey out to the backyard. Under some of that broken glass you'll find the saddlebags with the bank loot."

Pop slowly digested Makay's information, then took up an empty basket. He grinned wickedly.

Makay said, "Take Blinker with you. I'm riding a strong hunch that Blinker's nosing around that cemetery was right disquieting to Dan Hepburn." He watched Pop and the hound dog walk out.

Gladys had set down her scattergun and come quietly over beside Makay, listening.

Rita's eyes sharpened as she coolly measured Gladys. "Would it surprise you to know that Homer rode with my father last night, that Homer knew about the bank watchman and his cat—and that Homer was carrying the bank money?"

"What surprises me," said Gladys, "is that Homer had the guts to ride with

Chesseldine. He never showed any before."

'My father didn't know Homer, but Largo and Homer knew each other back in Kansas. They cooked up the bank robbery, and my father organized it."

MAKAY nodded toward Pop coming through the back door, carrying the basket. Pop was beaming.

Dan Hepburn chose that moment to step into the saloon and walk over toward Makay. He saw the basket pop had put on a table and looked down into it. Hepburn froze as an involuntary exclamation burst from him.

Makay shoved his Colt into Hepburn's stomach, and lifted his gun, saying, "You shot Homer off his horse during the raid."

Hepburn was too numb to answer.

Gladys nodded slowly. "I was up in Dan's room when the raid broke loose. Some horsemen rode from the bank across the backyard under Dan's window. He shot out, and one of the bandits fell off his horse. Dan didn't know that it was Homer till he went down for a look."

"Then," said Makay, "Dan hid the bank money in the Jawbone cemetery."

Hepburn's head bobbed mutely. Finally, he said, "It was a chance to get out of debt—to leave this place."

Rita asked Makay, "What are you going to do with him—" she jerked her

head toward Gladys—"and his fancy?"

"He shot at a bandit," said Makay, "like everyone else in town. Then he got greedy about the money."

"Like Chesseldine," put in Gladys.

Makay had to agree to that.

"And," said Rita pointedly, "you gave my father a running chance. Hepburn gets one, too."

Makay smiled crookedly at Dan Hepburn. "That's your answer. Just be out of town before the Wagonwheel boys get back." He looked at Gladys. "You, too."

Dan Hepburn and Gladys hurried toward the rear staircase.

"Pop," said Makay, "find Banker Thomas. Tell him the bandits hid the money—and that you found it. Give Blinker the credit. We'll sit on the money till you and Thomas get back."

"And then?" asked Pop, grinning in Rita's direction.

WE'RE slanting for Montana to buy us a little spread. You get the banker. We're in a hurry."

Makay took Rita's shoulders and looked deeply into her eyes. He saw that she was thinking what this marriage meant, and he could see in her eyes that she liked what it meant. He was no longer angry. It wasn't going to be such a bad day after all. ***

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War One. For 18 days he was to rip a path of fire and heroism across the Western front. His name was to evoke awe and anger among the Germans, and reverence among Allied soldiers in the trenches. Those who fought with him would regard him with a curious mixture of love and hatred. But when it was all over, they would agree that he was "the greatest fighter who ever went into the air." This tribute came from another pilot, far more famous than he—a pilot named Eddie Rickenbacker.

Luke was a lone wolf—cocky, headstrong, sometimes arrogant, and contemptuous alike of authority and of danger. He flew and fought as if it didn't matter to him whether he lived or not. Perhaps it really didn't.

He was just 20 when the U.S. declared war—a tall, broad-shouldered youngster with blond hair and a handsome, inscrutable face. Born and brought up in Phoenix, he spent a boyhood which was distinguished less for scholastic attainment than for derring-do. Once, out on the lonely sweep of an Indian reservation, he dove into a swollen, brush-choked stream to rescue a friend from drowning. Another time he climbed to the top of a school building to jump off, using a large wagon umbrella as a parachute. He was dissuaded only by the firm intervention of school officials.

In September of 1917, Luke enlisted. Commissioned a second lieutenant in the aviation section of the Signal Corps, he returned home for a final leave before going overseas.

"One thing will not happen," he said to a friend. "I'll never be taken prisoner." Then he said something else: "You'll hear of me before I'm through."

That was Frank Luke for you—cocky as they came.

In March, 1918, he reached France. After some advanced training, he got his combat assignment in July—the 27th Aero Squadron, First Pursuit Group. Major H.E. Hartney was CO.

The 27th was equipped with Spads—those ancient and brittle ancestors of today's jet fighters. In the heat of combat, the guns would jam. If you pushed them real hard, you might reach 175 or 180 miles per hour—if your wings didn't fall off.

Luke started out on the wrong foot. During his very first patrol over the front lines, he abandoned formation and went prowling on his own.

When he got back, Hartney was steaming.

"Where the hell did you go?" he demanded.

"Had engine trouble," said Luke, with a cool stare.

Hartney let it pass.

Bag Busting

Spree

Continued from page 35

A day or so later—on August 16—Luke did it again. This time, when he returned, he had a more exciting story to tell.

"Got me a Hun plane," he announced quietly.

Few believed him, for Luke had no confirmation. But that, he said, was because it happened deep in enemy territory.

Not until long afterward did he get official credit for the kill. By then it didn't really matter.

Luke was in big trouble with his fellow-pilots. They looked with intense displeasure upon any man who persisted in jumping formation. Their lives depended on teamwork, and whoever deserted the team jeopardized the lives of the rest.

Luke became a "loner," disdained by the other fliers and disdaining them in turn. And gradually there grew within him a taut and desperate determination to prove himself to the squadron, even if he had to die in the process.

One man, though, took a liking to Luke. His name was Joe Wehner. He, too, was a kind of outcast, but for different reasons.

Although he'd been born in Boston, Wehner's German name—in that period of war hysteria—made him a suspicious character. Intelligence officers had shadowed him all the way to France and even arrested him twice. The experience left him extremely bitter. He, like Frank Luke, was set apart from the others.

They formed a strange partnership—a partnership of pariahs—and became a deadly team of the air: Frank Luke the killer, Joe Wehner flying cover.

THIS partnership came about at officers' mess one evening. Luke overheard a stray fragment of conversation.

"...toughest thing a pilot can take on. Any guy gets one of those has my respect...."

Luke listened closely. The conversation was about balloons—the big, ugly *Dra-chen* which the Germans used for artillery spotting and observing Allied troop movements. A dangerous quarry, for they were protected by vicious anti-aircraft batteries and sometimes German planes. A pilot gunning for a Hun sausage had to dive straight into a sea of fire. Yet, it was more imperative to destroy balloons than planes. They were the eyes of the enemy, and without eyes, the enemy would be crippled.

The next day was September 12. Out on the flight line, Luke remarked casually to Wehner "Did you hear what they said about balloons last night?"

"Yes," said Wehner. "Why?"

"Oh, nothing much. Only I'm gonna get one today."

In a few minutes Luke was airborne.

He scouted the front until he found his balloon over Maricelles. Three passes through an inferno of anti-aircraft fire, and the balloon was *kaput*—a smoking heap of rope, wire and cloth.

The 18 days had begun.

On his way home Luke made a brash and hazardous landing in an open field near an American balloon crew. Had they seen the Hun sausage go down? They had. Would they give him a confirmation? Righto.

When he returned to his base, mechanics found his Spad riddled with shrapnel. Luke shrugged.

Hartney was transferred out of the squadron and Captain Alfred A. Grant took his place as CO. On September 14 Grant detailed Luke and Wehner to get a balloon over the town of Buzy.

THEY found the balloon and Luke went in after it. This time he got it in one pass—a long, screaming dive with both guns spitting. The balloon blew up with a satisfying who-o-o-sh!

But then, as he was climbing out, he ran into trouble. Eight Fokkers—the balloon's guardian angels—were on top of him, their bullets smashing into his instrument panel and tattooing his wings.

As if that weren't trouble enough, his guns jammed.

Wehner sailed into the fray. The diversion gave Luke a chance to break away and clear his guns. Wehner, seeing him disengage, did likewise. The two of them headed for Boigneville, where Luke had spied another balloon.

This one took six passes, and when he started his sixth, Luke had only 75 rounds left in his guns. But he nailed the sausage, and the two men flew home.

Luke's score to date: Three balloons in three successive days.

His plane was so badly shot up that it had to be junked. There were bullet-holes within six inches of his body.

But he had begun to make his mark.

On the morning of September 15 Luke and Wehner took off on another balloon hunt. They were under orders to stay together, but they defied the orders and separated. Wehner got a balloon near Verdun. Luke got one near Boigneville, then swept on to attack a second that he'd sighted over Bois d'Hingry. He dove on it, blew it up and was pounced upon by Fokkers. Wehner hustled to the rescue and knocked off a Fokker and an Albatross. The Huns scattered and the partners made for home.

But this wasn't enough.

That afternoon Luke went up again. He found still another balloon, destroyed it—in spite of a furious cannonading from the German guns—and made for his own lines, skimming the ground to keep the AA batteries from zeroing in on him.

Three balloons in one day! Six in four days—a record equaled by no other Allied pilot.

The name of Frank Luke was becoming known up and down the Western front. Doughboys called him "the balloon-buster." And his squadron mates were seeing him now in a different light.

If Luke sensed that he was at last winning their respect, he didn't show it.

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then I'll court-martial him."

the Huns, thinking he was finished, careened off to hunt other game. Pulling out of his dive scant yards above the ground, he swooped up under the belly of the second balloon and sent a torrent of bullets smashing into its soft skin. The sausage burst apart.

Luke was wounded and losing blood. His plane was limping badly. But no power on earth could have made him break away before he finished what he'd set out do. He was a man ridden by fury—a fury which could be appeased only by a last full measures of destruction.

Roaring out of the smoke over Brière Farm, he made for the little town of Milly, where he'd spotted the third balloon. A short, deadly dive, with guns chattering, and it was done. The balloon exploded in a sheet of fire.

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But he wasn't through. A few miles beyond Milly lay the village of Murvaux. Luke saw its streets clogged with gray uniforms. A Hun troop concentration! He ripped down and strafed the Germans, killing nearly a dozen of them.

And then he did a strange thing: instead of striking out for home, he circled, cut his engine and landed in a gently sloping meadow behind the church. Whether he did it because his plane was conking out or because of his wounds, nobody knows.

As the ship bumped to a stop, Luke climbed out of the cockpit and groped weakly toward a nearby stream.

Suddenly German soldiers opened fire on him. He turned, jerked out his automatic and started back to his Spad, hunching over, staggering, firing as he went.

He emptied his clip, and then a bullet struck him. He slumped dead.

He'd said he never would be taken prisoner. He'd also said they would hear of him before it was through.

The 18 days were over. He wasn't taken prisoner, and people had heard

Luke was buried there in the village churchyard, and not until after the Armistice did the Allies learn the details of his end.

The Congressional Medal of Honor and DSC were awarded to him posthumously, along with many other decorations. He was the only flier in World War One to be given the Congressional Medal. He was also the only man in U.S. military history to win the nation's highest honor while facing court-martial.

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Aaron Stern's

Impossible Escape

Continued from page 17

me glad that I was in the forest, and fired me with the overpowering resolution to survive.

The dawn of my second day was a raw, gray awakening high above the swaying trees. I crawled from the hole and began a search for wood. I had a box of matches and heat now was more important than food. I soon had a small fire going.

I spent the rest of the day digging the hole deeper and gathering wood for the fire. Already, it seemed to me, I would adjust myself to the forest and its way of life—and I would survive.

This became more apparent as the days went by. I learned to identify certain noises. I soon discovered that there were many other people in the forest and I learned how to douse the fire and crawl into the hole without leaving a trace when they approached.

Each day I learned more of my surroundings. About a mile from the hole I found a road used by the Germans to send fresh troops to the front. From a tree I would watch the troops come and go. When they had passed I would leave my perch and search the road. There were always pieces of discarded bread and scraps of meat and even chocolate.

The greatest treasures I salvaged from the road were a pair of shoes—and a knife. The knife was a good one about eight inches long. With it I could do many things. One of the first was to carve a rude cup from a piece of wood. With this I melted snow over the fire and for the first time I had something warm to drink.

During these long spells of hunger I was driven to frequent acts of desperation. One night, while a heavy snow fell, I crept past the Nazi sentries into a small village a few miles from the fringe of the forest. I made my way to the barnyard of what once was a fairly prosperous farm. In a matter of minutes I had throttled a plump chicken.

Now, with a fine dinner in prospect, a sudden weariness overcame me. I couldn't go any further, I simply had to sleep. I found the barn and climbed up into the hayloft, the chicken tucked under my coat. I had no sooner stretched out when I was asleep.

I was awakened by barking. I waited and listened. When the barking stopped I crawled to the barn door and peered out. It was still dark and the snow was still falling. I dashed around the side of the barn and fled across a field. Finally I found the road and soon I was back in the welcome arms of the forest.

It was shortly after this incident that I had another strange experience. Less than a half-mile from the hole I found the frozen carcass of a horse on what

Just thinking about these things made

appeared to be a seldom-used trail. I was soon hacking away at the joints of the horse with my knife when I noticed that the animal had been recently shod. Who owned it, and what was it doing dead in the forest?

It was spring before I got the answer. Far deeper into the forest than I had ever gone thrived a large band of outlaws. Of course there were many guerrillas in the forest, too, but they were dedicated to harrassing the Nazis and they worked at nothing else. The bandits were another matter. They preyed on everyone. Through intermediaries they even did business with the enemy. To be captured by them meant certain death. If you carried anything of value you would be stripped, then turned over to the Germans for a price.

I learned the hard way how cunning they were. It was a warm day in May. I had earlier enjoyed the luxury of washing out the pieces of rags that I used for clothing, and had sunned myself while they dried, and then I had gone berry hunting.

I WAS absorbed in this work when I suddenly found myself surrounded by six men. They had come upon me without making a sound.

This was my first contact with humans in five months and I jumped like a frightened animal.

"Hello, good friend," one of them said. "We are your neighbors; we also live in the woods."

I stood up and looked at them. They were cut-throats if I had even seen them.

"Why do you not join us," he said. "We have fine huts and there are good beds and always plenty of food."

The sound of such things tempted me.

"Come along and join us," one of them said. And before I realized what I was doing I had picked up my cup of berries and was walking along the trail with them.

Suddenly I realized how foolish I was. As we pushed deeper into the woods I became aware that others were watching us. Step by step I lagged behind until all but one of them were walking in front of me. The one who stayed by my side was the one who invited me to come along.

Without warning, as we made a turn on the trail, I made my getaway. For a moment he had me by the neck and then I struck. As he stumbled and fell, I darted into the underbrush. Now every wile of the hunted came to me like a second nature. I leaped across the ground with scarcely a sound. I leaped across the rocks and fallen trees as though it was something I had done all my life. The cries of alarm grew fainter as I sped along like a rabbit. My escape had been good. And I did realize that the horse could only be theirs.

From then on I doubled all caution. It was just as well. Late one summer evening I was just finishing a dinner of boiled grass and berries when I heard an unfamiliar sound. It was heavy tramping—eight or ten men—less than 100 yards from the hole. My sense of hearing had become so keen that I could tell what made almost any noise, but I wasn't familiar with these sounds.

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I built a fire to cook my dead fox, but before it

They told me just one thing: A Nazi patrol was not too far off. I knew, as did all the other inhabitants of the forest, that the Germans were deathly afraid of the woods and the men in there, and stayed clear. So this meant that the patrol was lost.

Soon the sounds were not so pronounced. The patrol had stopped. They had decided to camp for the night. What they would do when daylight returned was anyone's guess. The best thing for me, I figured, was to stay in a tree for the night. I had become an expert at this, losing neither my balance nor a minute's sleep.

I had a favorite spruce not too far from the hole and as I made for it I stumbled and fell in the dark. I had no sooner hit the ground when the calmness of the forest was blasted with the chatter of machine guns. For nearly five minutes, bullets screamed over my prone body, missing me by inches.

IT was hours before I moved again. Then, when I felt it was safe, I crawled inch by inch deeper into the woods. At last I was out of earshot of the Germans. I climbed a tree and went to sleep.

The summer and its small compensations of berries and grass soon gave way to the harsh blasts of winter. When the first snow came I was a little better prepared than I had been a year earlier. I had found a coat discarded by a German soldier and with this I covered the bottom of the hole. The hole, too, was deeper—about four feet—and provided more shelter. But that was about all.

I had also learned the value of a long staff. It was a fine weapon both for hunting and staving off attacks by animals. But better than this was my knife. I had become a master at hurling it. This saved my life more than once. The first time was during a raging storm near the end of December. I was huddled in the hole wondering when I would get a chance to forage for food. I heard the cries of a female wolf just outside. Like everything else in the forest she was starved and desperate.

I slowly pushed back the thatch that covered the hole. I looked out—and there she was, about 15 feet away. When she saw me the cries of hunger became a hissing snarl. Her eyes were ablaze with a wicked gleam. Her fangs were wet and bare.

I whirled about and faced her. With this same motion I pulled the knife from my belt and sent it flashing through the air. It plunged deep into her chest just as she was about to leave the ground.

About an hour later I was eating roasted wolf meat. Five days later there was nothing left but the pelt.

One morning, while I was searching for fire wood—I had long since learned how to start a fire by striking two rocks together—I heard a low growl behind me. I turned just in time to see a giant bulldog coming for me. I ducked to one side as it leaped. While it flayed the air with

its claws I sent my staff crashing across its back. It fell to the ground a writhing mass of fury. The animal's spine was crushed but it was still full of fight. I backed off a few feet and threw my knife. It pierced the belly. A widening crimson spread on the snow.

The meat of the bulldog was the toughest I had ever eaten—but it was meat.

I survived the second winter in the forest without as much as a cold. But I was glad when the grass and the berries sprang up again.

For one thing, signs on the trails and the roads to the villages indicated to me that the local farmers were moving more freely. Was it because the Germans were suffering setbacks at the front? Or was it because people had resigned themselves to the conquest? I had no way of knowing—but I soon found out.

One day, posing as a beggar, I approached a farmer driving a small, horse-drawn wagon through the woods. I asked him if he had any food he could spare.

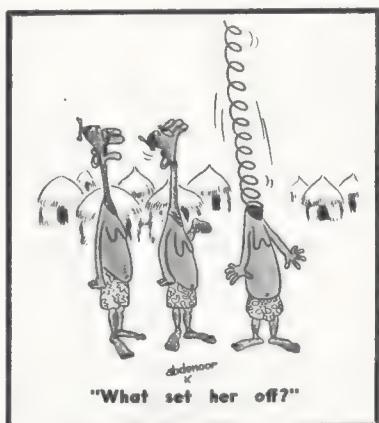
He startled me with his friendliness. Sure, he said, he had some freshly-baked bread. Would I like some? He handed me a small loaf. While I wolfed it down he offered me a ride. I accepted.

As we rode along he suggested that I return to the village with him. He could get me some clean clothes and if I liked, he told me, I could stay and work on his farm. I listened carefully to everything he said. And the more I heard promises of good food and an easy job, the more suspicious I became.

Just as we were approaching the village I was sure I detected the sound of hoofbeats. His face indicated that he heard them, too, but he obviously was not concerned. This meant only one thing to me. Get out.

I struck him full across the face and jumped from the wagon. As I leaped, he brought his horse whip crashing down across my shoulders. I made the edge of the woods just as a group of German soldiers rode into view.

I was not always to be so lucky. One day in July, while I was watching the road from a treetop a branch broke



was even done, I was devouring it—pelt, ashes and all.

under me and I fell to the ground. I cut my right hand. I prevented any possible infection with applications of saliva and urine.

But while the wounds healed I was unable to use the hand and this brought on a deep feeling of depression. The depression got so bad, I decided to go to the village to ask refuge from the local priest.

It was late afternoon when I started out and it was nearly nightfall as I entered the village. I tried to give the impression I was a beggar—and this wasn't too hard.

I WAS just approaching the church when I was stopped. It was a patrol. I had no identification papers and I was hustled off to the local SS headquarters for questioning.

When I saw the bright lights and the cruel faces all around me any feeling of resignation left me. The urge to fight came back.

I was ordered to a large room on the second floor where other prisoners were lined up with their pants down around their ankles. An SS officer went down the line. If the prisoner was found to be circumcised he was marched downstairs. No further questions were asked.

I was desperate. I told the guard I had to go to the bathroom. He motioned to a door at the end of the hall and gave me a push.

To my amazement I found there was no one else in the toilet—and that there was an open window. In panic I squeezed through the window, dropped to the ground two flights below, then ran into the darkness. There wasn't even a shot fired.

Three hours later I was back in the foul security of the hole. Most of the men who had been in the large room with me were by now dead.

This experience was enough to hold me in check until the cold weather came. And then I felt the urge to move. I was just regaining the use of my hand when I decided to make another break out of the woods for freedom.

Again I made my way to the village, again I posed as a beggar—and again I wound up in the hands of the SS.

This time I knew they weren't kidding. In a matter of hours I was herded onto a cattle train. Destination: A crematorium.

While the train was traveling at its highest speed I made my leap for life. I went hurtling over the side and rolled down the embankment. When I regained consciousness I was a mass of bloody bruises. I carry the marks until this day.

Hiding by day, crawling by night, I made my way back to the forest. I could go no place else. My leg was bad.

Then the first blizzard of the Winter came. I lay in the hole without food and raved to myself as the fever mounted. I told myself that I was going mad and to prevent this I recited poetry to myself while I writhed in agony.

The mental depression now was worse

than ever. I relived all the horror of the Warsaw ghetto. I remembered the night that my wife, Bella, and I had decided that we had to escape. We had crawled into the truck and had been carried outside the gates.

I remembered jumping from the truck with Bella and hastily kissing her as she fled in one direction and I in another.

What was she doing now? Was she still alive? Was all this hunger and deprivation, all this misery worth it?

I had traveled the 200 miles to the woods posing as a beggar. Could I now escape from the woods by the same ruse?

I got to my feet and I stumbled from the hole through the ever mounting snow, my leg thumping in pain. I was saying farewell to the forest after nearly two years. It had been a good friend—and a bitter enemy.

It was 1944. The Germans were on the run—but I didn't know it. The allies were closing in and pushing back the oppressor.

I pushed on, stumbling, falling through the storm, blinded by the wind and snow, crazed by torment that raged in my leg.

And then I found myself standing at the door of a farmhouse. Finally the farmer moved by my pleas and misery said, "Come in, come in, out of the cold."

My next feeling was that of hot soup coursing down my throat . . . and then of being hidden in a hole under the barn.

For the next few weeks the farmer and his wife helped me and with the hot water and towels they gave me, I bathed my leg and foot. The swelling went down—and I was able to use it again.

What followed I find hard to describe. It was so unreal. The dawn of freedom had come—the Germans and everything they had represented had been defeated—and the nightmare of horror was over.

I had made a pact with my wife that I would meet her in Lodz, the second largest city in Poland. But when I finally reached the ghetto in Lodz, after many weeks of travel by foot, I was sickened by what I saw: death, disease, ruin.

Where would I look for my wife? I stumbled through the ruins of the ghetto. But now, another miracle happened. I found Bella. She was living—in the ruins. She had remembered our agreement and she had been there, living in a hovel made of debris, waiting for me. I can't describe what it meant to see her and to hold her again.

Finally, we made our way to a DP camp in the American zone of Germany. For three years we waited . . . waited for a real first-hand glimpse of what freedom meant. Then the word came from the American Consulate that we could enter the U.S.

There was a gray, pre-dawn sky as our ship nosed into New York Harbor. I held my arm around Bella's shoulder to shield her from the wind-swept mist.

Just then the sun broke through. There was The Lady, aloof and majestic—a symbol of everything I had ever dreamed. ***

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Death of a Mob

Continued from page 32

Misunas chickened out and took to the foggy streets of San Francisco to hide out.

That left Mais and Legenza still in business. And even they didn't last much longer, for they walked right into a trap set for them in Baltimore. In this, Mais reached for his gun—a mistake. Six police machine-guns bullets in his back stopped him from using it. Six weeks later, both he and Legenza were back in Richmond to answer for the mail robbery and murder.

There was the trial, sentence—and then the fatal day before execution when the can of boned chicken was delivered to their cell.

Who delivered it? Hard to say. But this is how things went that day.

It was September 29th. Attorney Charles W. Moss sat quietly in the waiting-room of the Richmond jail, waiting for his clients Mais and Legenza to be brought in for a final conference before they were transferred to cells on "death row" in the state penitentiary.

"OKAY, you two," said Patrolman Bill Moore, as he swung open the cell door and summoned the killers to the conference. "Your lawyer is waiting to see you in the reception room, and . . ."

Moore never finished that sentence. Stepping into the cellblock corridor, Mais and Legenza each drew a heavy .45 from beneath their faded blue work shirts, and the guns seemed to come out blazing. Moore went down, and although he was not to die until later, he fell in such a way that he could not get at his gun to return the fire of the murderers. Deputy Sergeant John A. Selph, who accompanied the warden, also went down, shot in the abdomen.

Mais and Legenza raced for the front door of the jail, firing furiously as they went, and leaving a trail of Moore's and Selph's blood from the inner corridor to the front steps. Hearing the shooting, Patrolman W. A. Toot, who was standing guard outside, rushed up the front steps of the jail. But he never had a chance, either. Mais and Legenza saw Toot through a glass outer door. There was a roar of a gun, the crash of shattering plate-glass, and Toot lay mortally wounded on the jail steps.

Mais and Legenza raced up Jail Alley, turned east on Broad Street, and at 14th Street stopped a truck at pistol-point, forced the drivers out, and sped away. A few blocks farther on they abandoned the truck in favor of a sedan which they took from a driver. Then they disappeared.

Usually there are at least two ways of looking at anything. I have no doubt that

during that early October Mais and Legenza took a pretty optimistic view of their escape from the Richmond city jail and death in the electric chair.

Then there's the other point of view: ours. We knew that the men were guilty of at least three provable killings. We knew, further, that they had been stupid enough to monkey with the United States mails and the Federal Reserve Bank—which landed the manhunt squarely in the hands of the FBI.

WE knew, further, not only that Mais still carried in his body several machinegun slugs which the Baltimore police had put there, but that the police of Baltimore, Washington, Philadelphia, and New York wanted both men as badly as we did. And so we were not too discouraged when Mais and Legenza seemed to disappear into thin air after their Richmond jailbreak and murders. No matter where they went, police would be looking for them.

And the killers had no intention of dropping out of sight.

Phillips had been leader of the old gang, but now Phillips was dead, so Mais undertook to organize a new gang in Philadelphia. He was just getting started when Philadelphia police raided an apartment and captured several of his new henchmen. But again Mais and Legenza escaped. They fled to Wayne Junction, where they fought a pitched gun battle on the railroad station platform with police. Again the gun-slinging bandits escaped—but this time there was a difference!

To evade capture at Wayne Junction, Walter Legenza took a desperate chance. He leaped from an embankment to a concrete street 30 feet below, and he landed hard. The shock broke one of his legs and both of his heels, and he was helpless.

Mais, however, did not desert his pal. He spied an empty box-car nearby. He boosted the injured man through the open door and sprinted away, making good his own escape. Two hours later, driving a stolen car and having eluded the police, Mais returned, picked Legenza up, and drove him to New York.

Legenza found the pain intolerable, and Mais had to take his pal to a New York hospital. But hospitals cost money, and neither Mais nor Legenza had any. So Mais took a second chance: He telephoned a friend in Philadelphia for funds.

The police were on that call! They had listened a long time. Now the unhappy vigil paid off. They listened to every word of that long-distance conversation. But there was little or no point in closing in on Walter Legenza at that precise moment. He wasn't going anywhere—he was in the hospital. Meanwhile there were other fish to be netted....

One was Mais' girl-friend, and somehow, the FBI found her. She was dark-haired Marie McKeever, 34. They didn't arrest her right away, either, but followed her for days on the hunch that she would lead them to even bigger fish. She did.

Not only did she lead them to Mais, but also to several new members of the gang, including Edwin Gale and Martin

Farrell. When all the fish were singled out, police closed the net.

First they got Legenza. He, of course, was easily captured, since he wasn't going anywhere with his broken leg. Although using the name "William Stewart," he readily admitted his true identity.

Gale, Farrell and the girl, McKeever, were a little harder, but not much. Federal and local men moved in on them in a midtown Manhattan hotel.

This left only Bob Mais, also the most dangerous one in the new Bloody Bunch.

Nobody was inclined to take any chances with Mais. He was too slippery and too fast on the trigger. By following his girl, officers had located him in a Harlem flat. Then, in the cold of a January dawn, a small army of FBI agents and police crashed Mais' hideaway.

The killer had a gun under his pillow and a knife on a nearby chair, but he had no chance to use either. The FBI men in the raiding party were on top of Mais before he knew what hit him. It was over.

There was, indeed, a great contrast between the first and second "homecoming" to Richmond of the murderers Mais and Legenza. This time they came on the second section of the Havana Special, arriving at 6:25 A.M. Nine FBI men made up their escort. Legenza, his eyes closed as he lay on a stretcher, was hoisted from the train sleeper and carried to an automobile. It was a special job and had been modified to accommodate both the stretcher and a strong guard.

Mais, shackled so heavily that he could scarcely move under his own power, was helped into a wheel-chair. He wore handcuffs and extremely heavy leg irons. They were fastened so tight that he could take a step no longer than four inches. So perfect were the plans that precisely 29 minutes after they left the train, Mais and Legenza were behind bars, once more awaiting execution.

Robert Mais walked to the electric chair and paid his debt to society at 7:50 A.M. on a dark and raw February morning. He spoke no last words.

THHEY carried Walter Legenza to the chair 16 minutes later—and with him it was different.

Striding slowly at the side of the condemned man, the prison chaplain softly intoned the Order for the Burial of the Dead. Legenza's eyes had been closed. Now he opened them and looked at the cleric, who was saying:

"I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that He shall stand at the latter day...."

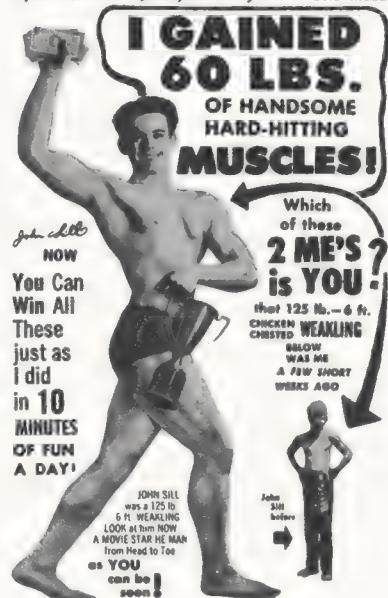
"Hey, you!" interrupted Walter Legenza huskily. "Cut that stuff! I'll go out just the way I've lived—without any psalm-singin', that is!"

And he did.

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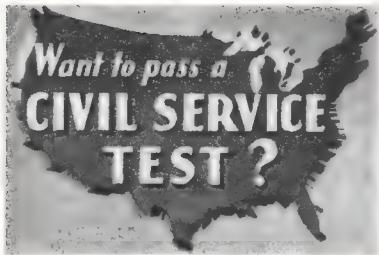
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back. He wouldn't allow us to trespass on his territory.

I told him to go back in the jungles and count his coconuts.

That made him sore. He said that he'd kill us all, especially me. I reminded him that I had 160 men and that every one of them was armed. If he wanted trouble we'd take time from our work to give it to him. I also reminded him that treaties with the tribes assured us a roadway through their territories.

THIE chief started another speech. I put my hand on his head, turned him toward the jungle and gave him a shove. Then I told the men to keep their eyes open for trouble.

An hour later I was in my jeep watching my bulldozers attack the jungle. It was slow going. The trees were thick-trunked and deep-rooted. Worse, they were covered with vines which fell all over our equipment and fouled up their tracks. When that happened the men had to use machetes on the vines. Sometimes the mechanics had to remove an entire track in order to tear the vines away from the gears. Then just before noon it happened.

The jungles erupted with screaming, howling Indians. They speared four drivers and two mechanics before the men realized what was going on. Then they faded back into the jungles.

"They'll be back," I shouted. "Watch for another attack." I assured them that we were in good shape to repel it. Each man carried a .45 and I had a .30 caliber tommy gun in my jeep. I also had a box of GI carbines, which I handed out. Then I ordered the men to run their equipment into a circle—something like the wagon trains used to form in the old west.

Luckily for us, the Indians didn't bother us while we formed the circle. Then we scroched behind that heavy machinery and began to wait. Chow time came and went. The guys got nervous and irritable—and plenty scared.

Then the Indians attacked. I took a row of them with my tommy gun and the other guys gave them hell with their weapons. But Central American primitives never know when they're licked. They kept on coming. And we kept on killing them. Some of them got inside the circle but we worked them over with wrenches, knives, sledges and axes. They soon caught wise. The survivors ran back into the jungles. We waited an hour to see if they'd had enough then I ordered the men back to camp.

That evening, at dusk, I sent two of my Costa Ricans into the jungles to find their village. Meanwhile I made plans for a payoff they wouldn't forget.

The two spies came back with the word that the village was three miles away. Early the next morning my little army went after it. I figured that if we plastered the hell out of them the word would spread to the other tribes and they'd all leave us alone.

We crawled through the jungles to the village's outskirts. There were about 400 natives there, including children. I ordered the men not to shoot women and children. Then I sent half of my little army to the other side of the village.

I put my tommy gun sights on the little chief who'd been so cocky the morning before. With four of his buddies he was squatting in the shade of a hut. When the men who had gone to the other side of the village signalled that they were ready for action I squeezed the trigger.

The chief and his pals never knew what happened. The other men were getting results, too. The Indians tried to defend themselves, but spears and bows and arrows are a poor match for guns. It was over in a few minutes. Then we went into the village and I told the survivors to spread the word that any other tribe which bothered us would get the same treatment.

There were no more Indian attacks. Other tribes, apparently having heard that rough stuff was a losing game, became pests in another way. They began to bring us gifts of fruit and meat. And they'd steal anything that wasn't too heavy to lug away.

I taught one of them, a weasel-faced little chief, the error of thievery. He filched a gallon of upper cylinder lubricant. One of the men caught him just before he got to the jungle with it and he brought him to me. I asked the Indian, through Jose, what he wanted that oil for. He said that he thought it was whiskey. It did look like whiskey.

So I told the Indian to drink it—every drop of it. He got a quart of it down before his face turned green. Then he ran toward the jungle. He didn't get there before he had to jerk off his breechcloth. That oil was the fastest acting laxative I've ever seen. My men guffawed but the Indians stared at their humiliated chief in great embarrassment. Then they took off for the jungles mumbling unhappily.

We got back to the job. My crew was the construction spearhead. Our job was to establish the first crude roadway along the surveyed route. Behind us followed the grade crew. Then the hard-top crew. Each outfit was organized into an autonomous unit—with its own mobile commissary, dispensary, mechanical repair and other facilities.

We got through the remaining two miles of jungle and through the Sangre de Maria mountains without any outstanding incidents—except for a few fights among the men during their off-duty hours. Those mountains weren't as difficult as I'd expected. They were steep, but easy compared to the jungles.

It was tough going in that swamp (the Antonellian marsh), tougher, even, than the jungles. Half of our time, it seemed, was spent pulling bulldozers out of the muck.

One man drowned in that swamp. He was a French-Canadian named Joe DeVere. He simply disappeared—along with his bulldozer—when he backed off the roadbed into a deep hole. We retrieved the bulldozer but not much of DeVere's body; the lapus fish had eaten most of it. Another man drowned in his submerged truck cab a few days later.

We got through the swamp eventually and I set up the camp in the jungle's edge and gave the men a day off. They needed a rest before we tackled the jungle again.

The date was April 9, 1956. We were on the home stretch. That day was memo-

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rable for an interesting reason. Shortly before dusk we had company. Twenty-four of the sexiest-looking young native women I've ever seen came out of the jungles. We stared at them open-mouthed. They began to grin.

With native frankness those uninhibited, almost-naked girls told Jose that they'd heard it rumored around the tribes that white men were the handsomest of all men. And they were there to see for themselves.

I'M no paragon of virtue. In fact, like most any globe-trotting bachelor I've known my share of women of all nations. But I wasn't thinking of companionship. Women in the middle of a camp of construction men means just one thing: big trouble.

So I ordered the girls to get the hell out of camp. That was a mistake. After that order I didn't have a friend in the outfit. In fact most of the men were cursing and making threats. Immediately I changed my order, thereby forestalling a certain mutiny. I said: "Okay. The girls can stay and we'll throw a shindig, but if there's one sign of trouble or rough stuff, the girls go and the guys who start it get their heads bashed in."

I'm glad I made that decision. If I hadn't I would have had a rebellion. Maybe a few guys would have been killed. As it was, when morning came I had a grinning, happy crew. But I still had to get rid of the girls.

When those girls finished their morning chow I told Jose to inform them to be on their way and if they ever came back I'd cut their noses off. Since that message was relayed in the Mihue dialect, which none of my crew could understand, no one wised up to what I'd done. The guys must have wondered, though, why those man-happy dolls took off in such a hurry.

We had work to do—we still had 17 miles of jungle to hack our way through.

That 17 miles began with more trouble. One of the mechanics died of a heart attack the first day we entered the jungle. A week later two of my men pulled the damnedest caper I'd ever seen in a lifetime of work with heavy equipment.

Those guys, a couple of hot-heads, had

been feuding for a long while—over everything. They just didn't like each other. That day, though, they brought it all to a head. They got into a bulldozer fight.

They tried to run each other down with those monstrous machines. They'd backed about 40 yards from each other and were racing for a head-on crash. Apparently each thought he'd knock the other guy out, or perhaps kill him.

I VELLED for them to stop, but even if they'd heard me above the noise of those machines they wouldn't have done it. So I stared open-mouthed while the machines raced together.

The results were spectacular. When they collided they actually quivered and bounded backward a short distance. With the other men I ran to them and shut off their engines. Then we pulled the dead bodies of the two drivers out of them. Each was crushed.

It cost me two days to get those machines back in shape.

We struggled on. For every inch of that jungle was a battle against odds that seemed determined to defeat us. The trees along the surveyed line not only had to be pushed over but shoved aside. Their intertwining vines were as tough as steel cables. Some days we actually progressed less than a quarter of a mile.

But on June 4 we licked that jungle. We came out of it near the village of Santa Felicia. Along with most of the men I was worn to a frazzle. But we had 50 miles of 30-foot-wide trail behind us.

There are still 84 miles to go. The company wanted me to take that portion, too. I said the hell with it, I'd had all of the Inter-American Highway I could stand. So I flew to the States. After a week of boredom in Omaha, my home town, I flew back to Mexico City and told the company I'd changed my mind.

I'm tackling that 84-mile stretch beginning with the end of the rainy season this year. They're giving me 12 months to do it.

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the sun as they headed for new resting places.

There were a dozen blasts. Shortly thereafter, running true to form, Arthur appeared, weighted down with one tiny bird in either hand. As always he had an alibi: "Not many about today."

You can see why our nightly ration of pigeon was about one forkful per person!

Before the cocktail hour we bathed. The women took hot baths. But the rest of us disliked folding ourselves into sections in the collapsible canvas tubs. We also detested the stink of gasoline from the petrol drums in which the bath water was heated. So we bathed in the river while Arthur perched on the bank with a .375 Magnum and kept a sharp lookout for crocs and hippos.

That day at dusk the intrusion came. "Crocs!" Arthur had a loud jarring voice and a nervous staccato way of speaking. He shouted at us to stay in the water and he would knock off the invaders before they could reach us.

Needless to say, our swimming hole had been completely evacuated by the time he got his first shot away. It was only a single croc and—as crocs go—not a very big one at that. Still, about a yard of its five-foot length seemed to be jaws, and since Arthur wasn't scoring anything that looked like a hit we were inclined to call it a day.

Arthur, however, insisted that he had scored a kill. He was already an "ace" at shooting down pigeons, and now he began painting a miniature crocodile on his mental fuselage. We left him to his fancies and trooped off to camp.

I resigned myself to the inevitable round table session (the campfire cocktail circle) where the conquering knight (Arthur) would regale us endlessly with his account of how the marauding dragon (the croc) had fallen beneath the steel (lead) of Sir Arthur.

It began even sooner than I expected. Arthur had returned triumphantly, and I was still soaking and reeking—afraid to smoke for fear of turning myself into a human torch—when a car drove up. I heard a man say, "What's all the shooting?" An unfamiliar voice. A stranger. Someone who did not realize that such a question was an open invitation for Arthur to start popping off.

To avoid facing the barrage I lingered in my bath, but there was no escaping the sound of that voice. The stranger promptly fired a bombshell into the breech. "Where are your hunters?" he thurt.

That hurt. "I'm one," Arthur blustered. He was protecting the camp, he explained. The other pros were still out fixing a broken-down hunting car.

He then took it upon himself to reveal

The Day Hollywood

Loused Up Africa

Continued from page 27

our mission. We were shooting a picture. We had been sternly warned by the senior game warden not to spook up the herds. That was absolute rot, of course. We had a stamped sequence in our film. But Arthur made it sound as though we had broken every law in the book, violated every rule in the game regulations.

I got out of the tub in a hurry, fearing the worst. This was the end. I could see the handwriting on the wall. Arthur and his tall stories! The stranger would probably turn out to be Rod Elliott, the game ranger. He would revoke our film license, kick us out of Kenya. Then we'd really be up the spout!

While I piled into my clothes Arthur raved on. Ever since we came to the Masai we'd been chasing animals, going "flat out—very fast—all the way!" We had bootlegged wonderful footage of every conceivable species, according to Arthur.

EXCEPT Cape buffalo. The brutes were so edgy that they fled at the slightest approach. The only thing we'd filmed was a handsome collection of buffalo rears. But we weren't licked yet, Arthur vowed, making it sound like he was chief of plans for the operation. The next time the bloody buffalo took refuge in the bush we would set it alight and smoke them out!

That smoked me out—just as the savage party rattled into camp. Lawrence and Tarlton greeted the stranger like a long-lost brother, but their display of affection did not seem to be reciprocated. The visitor was tall, thin, unsmiling and taciturn.

I stood there waiting to be introduced. The moment came. I shook hands with George Harvey, Tsetse Fly Control Officer for the Masai and—in Rod Elliott's absence—acting game ranger!

I turned as green as my bush clothes. Harvey looked like he was winding up to throw a blockbuster. Before it could hit, I drew Lawrence aside and hurriedly briefed him.

"Arthur has been shooting his mouth off. George is wise to what we're doing. Our only chance is to get him loaded!"

I had another idea. One of our actresses was genuine 14-carat wolf-bait. She always napped before dinner so I went into her tent, woke her, and explained the fix we were in.

"Get up and get dressed, Sexy," I told her. "Not the bush clothes. The vampire costume. Then go out there and throw him some curves."

George never had it so good. At dinner, by some strange coincidence, each of us passed up his allotment of tender, luscious pigeon. George got both of the birds. By then Johnny Walker Black La-

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The last time we saw the ranger and the girl, they were

bel was coming out of his ears. And Sexy was plastered all over him. Even Arthur, for once, was useful: the din of conversation was terrific; George couldn't get a word in edgewise.

The party was still going strong at midnight. Suddenly George and Sexy got up and headed for the river. I figured I knew the script.

"Let me show you the jungle at night." "Oh, that would be thrilling!"

Or some such dialogue.

Sexy threw me an anxious glance, easily interpreted: "How far must I carry this gag?"

I gave her an eloquent shrug: "It's all for the cause!"

They circled around behind George's Land Rover.

Then my conscience started to bother me. Sexy was a good sport but, after all, George really wasn't her type. And since we had built him such a beautiful platform he might be tempted to take a dive off the deep end. At that point everyone else was too loaded to give a damn, but I kept sneaking worried looks at the action offstage.

After three or four peeks I was startled by a hair-raising sight: George, in silhouette, aiming a rifle. I did a classic double-take, which attracted the others' attention, then jumped to my feet and led the charge to the scene. We found George—with Sexy at his elbow—drawing a bead on two tiny red lights across the river on the bank. The gun roared. The lights went out.

WE were speechless, uncomprehending. Then George turned and peered at our faces, one by one, till he came to Arthur's.

"I just killed your dead croc," he muttered thickly—and with unmistakable satisfaction. Then he collapsed his lanky frame into the Land Rover and gave us a parting wave.

"See you tomorrow," he said. "Take care." That one was loaded with meaning.

Bright and early the next morning we found the body. The croc's reflexes had

carried it almost all the way into the water before the shot took effect.

It was one of those days. The sky was hung over; so were we. Especially Sexy and the rest of the girls. We decided to let them sleep in and try to fashion a crocodile sequence before the carrión got any older.

He labored for a couple of hours, rigging wires to the legs and body, and removing underwater obstacles, so we could maneuver the croc along a free passage without getting him hung up in midstream. After photographing the reptile's "approach" from two or three angles, we shot a closeup of the jaws, propping them open with wooden blocks placed back near the hinges, then jerking the blocks away with invisible fish-line, so that the jaws snapped shut viciously.

Later we would film some tie-in shots of one of the girls. When the individual scenes were edited, the result—we hoped—would be: girl swimming; croc approaches; girl sees croc; croc sees girl; girl swims for shore; croc swims for girl; girl reaches shore; croc reaches girl; (almost); girl dodges frantically; croc takes vicious bite, misses; girl scrambles up the bank to safety.

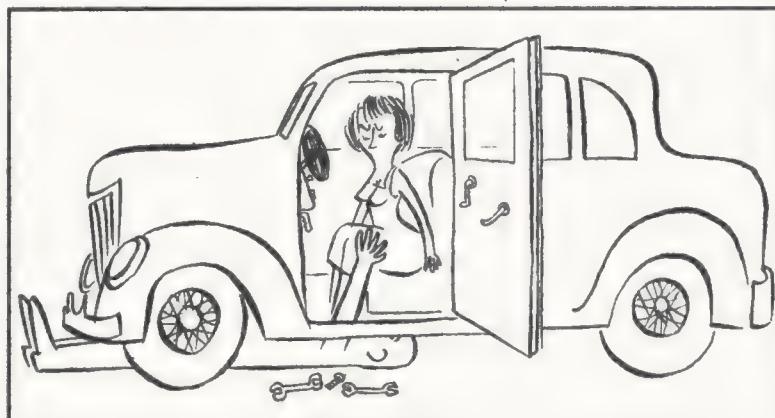
Mechanically the croc's "performance" was a huge success. Artistically I had my doubts.

"What's it going to look like?" I asked Jim Davies, our British cameraman.

He smiled and shrugged. "Like a dead croc!"

It was just one of those things: worth a go, but it hadn't come off. We gave it up and went out after the buffalo.

There was nothing doing on the plains. It was nearly noon and the game had sought shade from the heat of the day. That figured. Anyway, our main purpose was to test the air and see how many flies we would draw from George. Presumably he'd have game scouts posted on various vantage points, watching our every move. And to avoid the possibility that he might call at the camp in our absence and be treated to another enlightening discourse from Arthur, we had brought Young Leatherlungs with us.



going to the river. Then we heard his gun roar.

We didn't have a hope of filming our oft-frustrated buffalo stampede, but to make it look good, in case we were being watched, we went through the motions of trying.

The camera and crew were dropped off in the shade of an acacia tree. Since the buffalo always ran away from the cars, the plan was for Lawrence and Tarlton to locate a herd, circle it, and then gently nudge the beasts back toward our position. When they were near enough, an "accidental" honk of the horns would startle the brutes into stampeding past us, probably at about half speed. But if we undercranked the camera it would produce a reasonable facsimile of the effect we wanted.

THES cars shoved off. Arthur stayed behind with us on the off chance that a curious lion or a foraging elephant or a cantankerous rhino might wander by while the hunters were gone. The knowledge that we were dependent on "Sure-shot" made us look for a place of refuge in case the need arose. The obvious escape hatch was directly above us; the branches of the tree.

For the next hour or so we dozed in the shade while Arthur stood guard. He kept disturbing the peace by bombarding us with potential crises, and how he would handle them, until someone finally told him to shut up and let us do the dreaming. Arthur departed in a huff to a fair-sized copse of bushes only about 300 yards away.

Perhaps ten minutes had passed when I thought I heard a car. I opened my eyes and looked about curiously. There was no car in sight. But there was something else.

A faint but unmistakable wisp of smoke spiraled up from the copse.

The rest of the crew had spotted it too. "I'll bet Arthur tried to light a cigarette and set the bush on fire," someone speculated.

The smoke got thicker. A moment later Arthur burst out of the thicket, clutching his rifle with one hand and holding up his pants with the other. He was really making tracks.

"Must have had a nightmare," Jim Davies muttered.

By this time Arthur was well clear of the fire. Yet he continued to pour on the coal, heading straight for us. Then we saw the reason: Suddenly, out of the copse, popped a horde of buffalo.

What followed happened much more quickly than the time it takes to describe it. We were on our feet in an instant. "Hit the switch!" I shouted. The camera rolled; Jim panned around and centered on the charge. Then he looked up from the viewfinder, shaking his head at me.

"Arthur!" he bawled. "Get him out of there—he's right in my picture!"

I screamed and waved my arms, but Arthur had a mind of his own. He kept coming for us, and his 100-yard lead was rapidly diminishing. Behind him the buffalo rolled on like an avalanche. The

ground shook. The noise grew deafening. They charged with their heads up and their eyes open, looking big as houses.

Then we all abandoned ship simultaneously. You've never seen a bunch of guys go up a tree so fast in your life. It was a mad scramble. I vaguely remember that while I mashed someone's fingers somebody else stepped on my face.

But somehow we made it and clung to our perches, breathless with fear and exertion, gaping at the awesome spectacle below us. Arthur was close enough now to see that we had a full house, the lower branches all occupied. Wild-eyed and frantic, he swerved and pounded toward another acacia about 50 feet away.

The buffalo played follow the leader and changed course accordingly.

The camera was still running. With his practiced eye Jim Davies appraised its perspective. Arthur was now out of the picture and the pursuing beasts were charging past the lens.

"Smashing!" Jim exulted in my ear. "This'll go down well in a smoke-filled cinema!"

But poor Arthur: He was rubber-legged. He reached that tree with his dying gasp. Ten yards farther and he would never have made it. The buffalo were closing in so fast that you could see the herd bull taking dead aim on Arthur's posterior. I cringed and winced. Arthur was going to be pulverized!

But apparently he still had some strength in his arms. He hauled himself into that tree like a nimble baboon—the pointed tip of a four-foot spread of horns missed his rear by inches. Then the herd thundered on, dodging the tree-trunk with surprising agility for such mammoth beasts. By the time the dust had settled, the buffalo were far up the plain, grazing lethargically as though nothing had happened.

I glanced back at the burning bush. George Harvey's Land Rover was approaching in the distance. Then, as we descended to the ground, George Harvey drove up to us, looking extremely sober and full of apologies.

That copse had been infested with tsetses, he explained. But when he'd set it alight he had no idea that Arthur was in the thicket. Or the buffalo, for that matter.

With renewed wind and dignity Arthur rejoined us. "How did it look?" he demanded. "Did I bring them close enough to the camera?"

I stared at him incredulously. Could he stand there with a straight face and ask us to believe that he had provoked that charge deliberately?

He could.

That moment dictated a change in my future plans. Kenya is a beautiful country; I had been toying with the idea of settling there permanently. But now I abandoned the notion. As soon as the job was done I would return to the States. If I stayed in Kenya—I would never hear the end of how Arthur led the charge of the stampeding buffalo! ***

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Trapped Inside an Iceberg

Continued from page 31

was visibly edging around. The dark opening was a slit that seemed to expand as it drew closer. The vessel was still in the pull of the currents—and those of us in the wheelhouse looked on, helpless, in awe.

Even at the last instant, it appeared that the vessel would make contact with a protruding shelf of ice—but a sudden shifting, almost too quick for the eye to follow, brought a good two-thirds of the *Burleigh* directly into the berg's tunnel-like opening! Inside, long, dangling ice stalactites were sheared off by the entering vessel and exploded on deck like a shower of glittering daggers. Everyone lunged for cover.

IT was a weird experience. A cargo vessel 365 feet long, with heating, housing, machine units adequate for a small village of 200 population—suddenly snatched out of the open sea into a dark, frigid hole. The immediate panic was not one of being trapped—because we all figured we could back the *Burleigh* out. The stern was still protruding out of the berg. The real danger seemed to be that the great masses of ice to which the stalactites were attached, might fall on the vessel.

We were wrong. After the first brittle sprinkling of stalactites—there was no other dislodgement. The ice ceiling inside the berg was hard as solid rock. But when Tedden shot the engines into reverse and we tried to back out, the concentric turning of the berg blocked the vessel in from behind! The drop in the temperature was instantaneous. There was still some heat radiating throughout the ship but as soon as that drained off—it was like entering a massive deepfreeze and having the door slammed shut from behind. The thermometer on the bridge registered ten below zero—and at one P.M., two hours later, it was down 21 points!

The ice walls blocked off the slightest breeze, making the cold dangerously deceptive. I was working a scraper on the deck with Koehler, the stocky Swede bosun when I noticed the top of his nose and chin was as white as chalk. I sent him below and less than five minutes later, removed the glove of my right hand to find my fingertips devoid of sensation, the flesh a mottled blue.

Captain Tedden had the purser break open the slop chest and distribute every article of clothing available. I put on two suits of heavy underwear, three pairs of pants, two wool shirts, a windbreaker and an arctic overjacket—and some of the men were even more heavily dressed. But everywhere, inside and out, as they worked or stood about, they kept on the jump, slapping their arms against their bodies.

At this point, any attempt to back out blindly was considered too great a risk. If the prop blades were chewed to pieces on the ice spurs—we were finished. The only reasonable second choice was to heel the *Burleigh* completely around.

The engines started up with a shudder that swelled into a deafening rumble. The sound bounced off the enclosed walls and struck back at us. The *Burleigh* had swung around about one degree when the engine vibrations brought on the warning crackle of splitting ice. A great fault opened deep in the wall nearest the shifting stern and then the heavy slabs started to peel off and topple away.

The first one struck the rail, ripping loose a section and clanking against the hull. Another—weighing at least two tons, fell to the deck with a jarring impact. If it had fallen from a greater height, it would have seriously damaged the vessel.

The loose ice from beneath the hard surface began piling on. The bosun, myself and four of the deck crew ran out with axes and began hacking up the boulders, rolling off the pieces—but more of it was coming down. And out of fear of being crushed by ice, the engines were cut. Nor could they be turned up again. The risk was too great.

With the engines off, there was no further heat source. Every remnant of tarp and canvas was collected and bundled over us.

The ship kept on moving but the slow revolution of the berg kept pace, getting us nowhere. Tedden put the situation to the men. "We've been radioing steady distresses since we got into this," he said, "but a ship would be committing suicide to attempt to come through the ice for us. We can continue sitting it out—taking our chances, or we can put lifeboats over the side and try to haul the ship out—with manpower!"

All of us with a fair amount of sea experience knew what the job called for, even under normal temperature conditions. It was backbreaking—but at this time movement, physical exertion meant life to us and there wasn't a dissenter aboard.

THREE lifeboats were lowered away. Ropes were fixed to them and using oars on two—the third being motorized, we started giving it muscle. I was in the second lifeboat. It was slow and grueling work. And when the motor from the lead boat, small as it was, had to be cut because it vibrated, the effort became man-killing.

It wasn't humanly possible for a man to keep going on the oars for more than five minutes without a break. An excruciating ache bit into the bones. It was like having a steel spike driven into the

nerve centers. I dropped the oars and began rubbing my legs.

I went back to the *Burleigh* with a dozen others and a relief crew came on. It continued this way for 18 hours—at which point the vessel was hauled about a third clear.

By this time, none of us were in a condition to continue on the oars. Ropes were fixed to the ice protuberances to hold the vessel in position, so the *Burleigh* would not lose ground. We piled into the saloon mess, where the benches and tables had been removed and men were lying outstretched on the burlap padded deck. One man already was dead. It was Reiler, an ordinary seaman, the youngest man aboard. The rest of us bunched up, arms over legs and shoulders, bodies bundled up in every last shred of canvas and tarp, blankets and bunk mattresses.

THREE was no way to rest. No way to stop shivering. Several of the men had developed continual, hacking coughs.

The night was the worst of my life. There was no sensation in the toes of my right foot, several of my left and in the fingertips of both hands. I kept on curling the toes, grinding them into the leather of my shoe, trying to force back some feeling.

"Hayson is dead too," someone said. It was Orega, the oiler. Nobody spoke. Nobody made a move to drag the body over to Reiler's, which was weirdly rising now, bending from the middle as the cold contracted the muscle tendons.

On the morning of the third day, we knew we had to continue the boat detail. Remaining on the deck was just waiting for death. The cold had a drowsy, mind-numbing effect I removed my right shoe, to change the socks—and as I pulled, the frozen flesh came off my toes in chunks and stuck to the cloth! I was afraid to remove the other shoe.

Back on the oars, because of the drift of the currents, we were making better progress than before. We were at it the entire morning, when a great ice sludge, at a point where the ship's ropes had been fixed, began to topple over the

starboard bow. It eased down with a *clunk!* and the whole vessel dipped forward, the stern rising up out of the water. The closest lifeboat was tugged forward and suddenly, even while the men struggled to keep it steady it flipped over, dumping them into the sea.

I was in the second boat and we came in fast, the first lifeboat behind us, and started fishing out the men. The water struck our hands with icy shock. Five of the nine men we hauled out were dead almost immediately. By the time we got the other three, they were encased in ice. We tried to chip it off. Not much point to it. The men were dead and we returned them to the sea.

Another lifeboat was put over the side and the mate, the captain, the engineer left the *Burleigh*. The Old Man waved his hand, signalling us to disengage all ropes and row out into the open, beyond the berg. We were abandoning ship.

Silently, we rowed out into the vast, ice-choked sea. What each of us felt was inscribed on our faces. It was a matter of hours for some, for others a day—perhaps miraculously, a second day. Then we would all be dead.

We did not remove those who lay dead beside us on the following morning. We huddled against them for warmth. Then, suddenly (no one had seen or heard its approach)—there was the outline of a vessel! The Norwegian *Saubord*, a modern freighter with a hull specially constructed for ice cutting. The American vessel *SS Farnal* had relayed our distress signals.

The remaining men, 18 of a crew of 26, clambered on board the Norwegian ship where we were filled with hot drinks, brandy, wrapped in blankets—and our frostbitten limbs treated. During that night, three more of our men died. The 15 that lived made it into Valparaiso, Chile.

To my knowledge, none of these men has ever shipped out together again. I have been present in the union hiring hall at times when they met and avoided it.

Whether it is superstition—or just the sight of another crewman bringing back the entire tortuous experience, I don't know. ***



To The Man With HERNIA Who Can Not Submit To Surgery

The man condemned to live with rupture, all too often faces a grim future.

There is only one known cure . . . and that is surgical correction. Yet, for many, this relief must be denied or delayed for any one of a variety of reasons. It is to this group of unfortunate persons that this message is directed.

There are two choices—to wear a truss, or not to wear one. But, since hernia never heals itself, and generally continues to become more severe, the second choice is eventually eliminated. That leaves only one question in the mind of the hernia sufferer: What kind of a truss should I wear? Until recently there were very little choices. Most trusses all looked alike. They consisted of a leather covered steel spring which snapped around the hips, firmly pressing an unyielding pad against the hernia opening. Many hernia victims chose to be semi-invalids and risk danger of strangulation, rather than wear a truss.

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(Signed) MONROE PROELHILICHE, JR., Business Manager

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MALE CALL

LATER, ALLIGATOR

To the Editor:

In the September issue of MALE, Inside for Men contained the statement "you can't own or sell an alligator in Florida less than four feet long." We would like to inform you that it is illegal in Florida to molest, or take or possess without permit, any alligator, crocodile, or similar reptile under six feet in length at any time.

Alligators over six feet in length may be taken in certain parts of the State of Florida at certain times of the year under a special permit . . .

A permit is required to keep any alligator, caiman, or crocodile or similar reptiles in captivity for scientific or exhibition purposes or for mounted specimens.

Sale of alligators and crocodiles and the skins of alligators or crocodiles under six feet in length is prohibited at all times . . .

*Robert A. Dahne, chief
 Information and Education Division,
 Florida Game and Fresh Water
 Fish Commission*

► We thank Mr. Dahne for setting our error straight, but in doing so, he has raised another question. How do all those little crocs and gators tourists buy by the thousands to send to their Aunt Minnie fit into the six feet law?

SUCKER BAIT

To the Editor:

I couldn't help but give three cheers for you people at MALE who were responsible for the fine exposé on medical quackery in the November issue.

If more such articles were done on other frauds, perhaps a friend of mine in New York (who shall remain nameless) wouldn't have gotten into the fix he did.

He needed money, as most people do who are suckered into things, and he went out to mortgage his house. He was afraid he wouldn't be able to get it through a regular bank, so he drifted into a loan agency that was more than willing to let him have the money with his house as security. But first, he had to agree to sign some papers. It seems they wouldn't let him borrow the

money as an individual, only if he would incorporate his property so the money could be loaned to the corporation, not the individual. His house became the 202 corporation (the 202 being his house number). Then, after he'd signed, he found out what the hitch was.

It was this: almost whatever they wanted. The New York State usury laws at the time specified a ceiling of about five percent on interest rates for individual, but on corporations, the sky was the limit. My pal wound up paying \$6,000 for a \$3,500 loan.

The laws have since been changed to keep these "bonus mortgage" boys from preying on guys like him, but I'm sure they'll pop up with something else in no time. They always do, and it seems that there are always guys like my pal waiting to be sucked in.

Roland Guilford
 Queens, N. Y.

THEY FAVOR FOSTER

To the Editor:

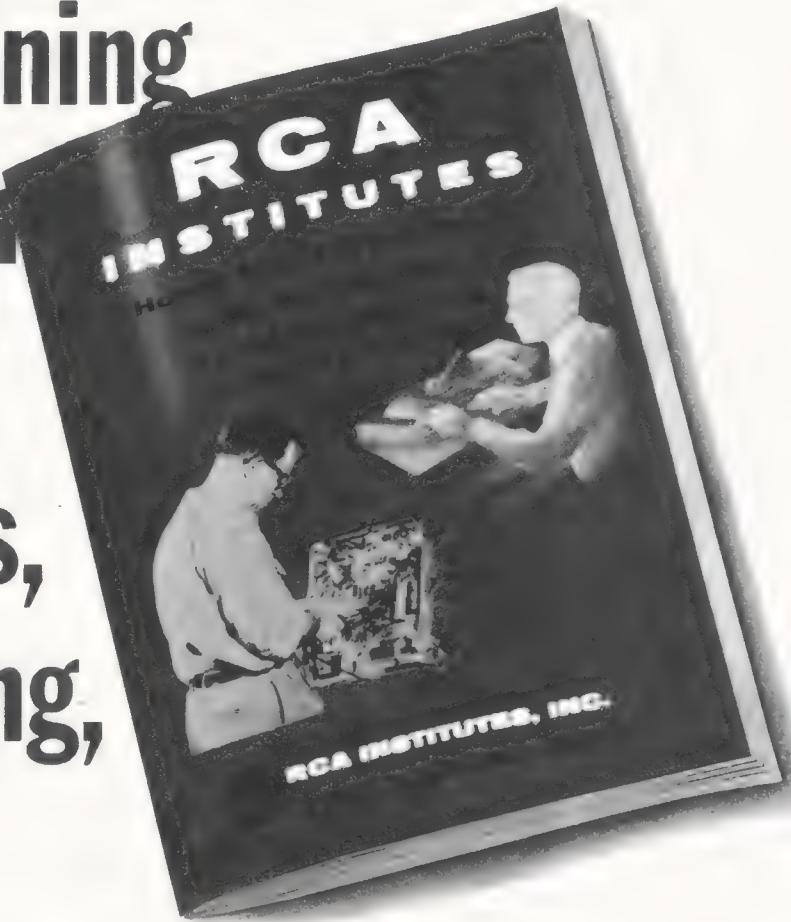
Ever since we saw little Judy Foster, the girl who likes to be alone (MALE, November) me and my buddies here at Fort Dix have agreed she's the girl we'd most like to meet at Jones Beach.

Private Harlan Folsom
 Fort Dix, N. J.

► Miss Foster promises to keep her eyes peeled for Fort Dix men at Jones Beach next summer. To tide Private Folsom and company over in the meantime, however, we convinced Miss Foster to send along this memento.



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CALL GIRL BAIT

continued from page 23

"I thought I explained that we want you to conduct an investigation and give us a report on the crime situation in Aragon City."

"Yeah, but *why?* Why do you want such a report?"

"We have reason to believe," Willis said, still sounding like he was giving a fiscal report to his stockholders, "that there is considerable crime in Aragon City. That is, undetected crime. We have been given to understand that there is large-scale gambling going on, considerable traffic in drugs, and that the morals of our city are being endangered by the presence of a great many—ah—houses of ill fame."

"Okay," I said, "so your city is overrun with gamblers, drug peddlers, and prostitutes. I still want to know why you want to hire me."

"What do you mean?"

"It's simple," I said. "It's not much of a secret that the Aragon City end is being run by two men, Jan Lomer and Johnny Doll. Lomer is the brains and Doll's the muscle. Everybody knows this from the FBI on down, but you don't see either of them going to jail and it's doubtful if they will. The FBI, the Treasury boys, and the Senate Crime Committee have all gone over these boys with fine-tooth combs. And got nothing. If you expect me to hand you evidence that will put Lomer and Doll in jail, you've got rocks in your head. I couldn't find it where better men have failed and I like living too much to try."

Linn Willis started to say something, but I held up my hand to head him off. I took a deep breath and started again.

"The other angle," I said, "is that maybe you want me to buck your city police force and local politics. If this is it, I want to know more about where I stand. It doesn't take a genius to guess that somebody in the city is crooked and probably a lot of them."

"Where did you get that idea?" Willis asked quickly.

"I said you don't have to be a genius. Half of the people in this town are sure that the whole political setup is getting paid off."

When Willis spoke he was using his chairman-of-the-board voice again.

"We are, of course, aware of the existence of Lomer and Doll. We trust that eventually something can be done about them. But, in the meantime, we are quite certain that they do have connections with certain individuals in the present administration. We want you to find evidence of such connections between Aragon City officials and Lomer and Doll, or their representatives. On the basis of such evidence, we will launch a reform ticket in the next election."

"Okay, so far," I said. "But there are a couple of other things. First, my fee. It will be a minimum of five thousand, win, lose, or draw. Ten thousand if I hand you everything you want."

Willis looked around the table again,

but I noticed his gaze stayed longest on the old lady. And when she nodded, he turned back to me.

"We are prepared to pay that fee," he said.

"Plus expenses," I said.

"We expected to pay your expenses," he said stiffly.

"One more thing," I said. "It has to be understood that I am strictly on my own. Until my report is ready, I take no orders from any of you, nor do I report anything to you."

"Very well," he said finally. "We have made certain arrangements for you," Willis continued. He drew two keys from his pocket and placed them on the table. Then from another pocket he drew three papers and added them to the keys. "We have arranged an apartment for you. It's at sixty-two Miramar Terrace. We are also providing a car for you. You will find it parked downstairs. It's a black Cadillac, license number 8T6860. It's registered in your name. And here is a California driver's license in your name."

He paused for me to be impressed. I grinned.

"Then we thought it best for you to have some authority. The District Attorney, Martin Yale, is with us, so we've arranged for you to be on his staff of investigators. Here, also, is a gun permit."

They were all beaming at me, so I didn't have the heart to make the crack I wanted to. Besides, they might have gone right out and enrolled me in the Boy Scouts.

"Okay," I said. "What else?"

"That is all," he said. "After tonight you're on your own. And I'd like to wish you good luck."

I DROVE to my apartment. I walked up the stairs and slipped the key in the lock. The door opened and I stepped inside, closing the door behind me. I fumbled around the wall, feeling for a light button.

It was dark in the apartment. There was a faint odor of perfume hanging in the air.

I found the light switch and flicked it, thinking that it would be nice if somebody had made a mistake and left the girl in the apartment.

They had.

The studio bed in the living room was made up. Clean sheets and everything. The sheets weren't even mussed because the girl was lying on top of the covers. On her back, with her hands clasped under her head. Her hair was the color of cornsilk. It drifted around on the pillow. She had very little make-up on and there was nothing to keep me from seeing that she was a natural blonde.

Her clothes were all draped over the nearest chair. Neat. But not half as neat as the figure draped on the bed, so I went back to looking at it.

"Any complaints?" she asked.

"The complaint department just went out of business," I said. I glanced at the key in my hand and then looked up again. At her face. "I must have gotten in the wrong apartment," I said.

"Not if you're Milo March."

"I'm Milo March," I admitted.

"Then you're in the right apartment,"

she said. She rolled over on her side, facing me. "I'm Mickie Gill. Hello."

"Hello," I said uncertainly.

Her eyebrows went up. "Your eyes say I'm welcome, but your voice doesn't sound too sure. Maybe I'm in the wrong apartment," she said, giving me an amused glance.

"You're in the right apartment," I said, "but maybe it's the wrong time. Will it do any good to ask who sent you?"

She looked surprised. "Why not?" she said. She sat on the bed.

"Polly East," she said. She gave me another smile. "It's on the house—if that's what's worrying you."

I didn't know the name of Polly East, but I didn't have to after her last sentence. Mickie Gill was a professional.

"Maybe I don't like presents," I said. "Let's put it that way. You come back some other night and I'll pay my own freight. Right now, honey, there's only one thing I want more than you—and that's to have you dressed and out of here in about three minutes. Can you do that and still be friends?"

She gave me a long look. Whatever was up, she didn't know she was part of it and somehow that made me feel better. She must have seen what I was feeling, for she got up from the bed and went to her clothes.

"A form?" she asked quietly. But she was already dressing.

"I think so," I said. "I'm sorry, Mickie," I added.

"So am I," she said. "I don't like things like that. I'm going to find out . . ."

She was out of there in three minutes flat.

Then I stretched out on the bed and tried to look like a tired businessman relaxing after a hard day.

"March," I said to myself, "two will get you twenty that the cops will be here within fifteen minutes."

They were there in ten. Two of them in plain clothes.

One of them was a little paunchy around the middle and he had the tired eyes of a man who's been tramping around knocking on doors too long. He even walked flatfooted. The other one was tall and skinny. And bright-eyed. He was the hungry one.

"Hi," I said. "What can I do for you?"

"Where is she?" It was the skinny guy, just like I'd expected.

"Who?" I asked innocently.

"The dame," he said.

"I don't know what you're talking about," I said. "I got a notion to call the cops."

"All you have to do is whisper," the skinny guy said. He gave me that grin again. His hand came out of his pocket and he flipped his palm toward me. The badge was there. "Headquarters."

"Him, too?" I asked, indicating the other.

"Sure. Show the man your badge, Harry."

The paunchy one showed me his badge like he was afraid I'd steal some of the nickel off it.

"Okay, so you're cops," I said. "Have you got names or only badges?"

"I'm Grant," the skinny one said. He

jerked a thumb at the other cop. "He's Fleming."

"So sorry you had the trip for nothing," I said. "Close the door as you leave."

They went out and closed the door. Hard.

I drank some brandy and needed it.

I was on my second drink when the phone rang. I picked it up.

"Hello," I said.

"Hello, darling," the voice said. It was a woman's voice, but deep. It sounded like a lot of Canadian Club. "This is Polly East."

"Hi, Polly," I said. And waited.

"I sent a girl out to see you tonight," she said. "Mickie Gill. Did she get there?"

"Came and gone," I said.

"Well," said Polly, "How'd you like her?"

"I liked Mickie all right," I said, "even though she wasn't here more than a few minutes after I arrived. But I didn't care much for the two cops who came ten minutes later. You send them too?"

"I knew nothing about cops," she said and her voice was hard. "I don't play like that, Milo. I'll look into it and maybe I can square it. I'll let you know."

She hung up. I grinned at the phone and put the receiver back.

Three or four brandies later, I went to bed.

I thought about the Committee and grinned to myself. They had made such a big thing about being secretive. Nobody knew the apartment, an unlisted phone number, and all that. So before I'd been in the apartment an hour, I'd been visited by a fancy call girl and two tough cops, and had a phone call from Aragon City's leading madam. Some secret.

THE next morning I took a shower and shaved. Then I got dressed and went into the kitchen. I had to say one thing for the Committee—they knew how to stock a kitchen even if they weren't so good at keeping a secret.

It was almost ten when I finished my breakfast, I figured it was still too early for callers, so I'd have time for one more personal thing. I dialed the number of the Aragon City Civic Betterment Committee.

"Good morning," a girl's voice answered. It was the redhead.

"Miss Carr?" I said as formally as I could.

"This is Miss Carr speaking."

"Miss Carr, I represent the Frammis Lineage Corporation," I said, trying to put a little lettuce in my voice so it would sound as stuffy as Linn Willis. "We are making up a directory of all the Carrs in California. Would you mind telling me your first name?"

There was a pause and then she laughed. "Good morning, Mr. March," she said.

"My first name is Milo," I said. I liked her answer.

She laughed again. "It's Betty," she said. "Did you want to speak to Mr. Willis?"

"No," I said quickly. "You're more my type than he is."

"Why, thank you," she said. "Are you

going to start working right now today?"

"You might call it that."

"What are you going to do?" she asked.

"Or shouldn't I ask that?"

"You may," I said. "Nothing."

"But—I don't understand . . ."

"It's simple," I said. "If a guy like me comes into a strange town and starts trying to dig up the kind of dirt your Committee wants, he'll get about as far as a guy going to Las Vegas with his own dice. But if he doesn't do anything, then everybody starts worrying. I don't push the way they're expecting me to, so they're off balance. The only problem is to keep them off balance like that long enough."

"It sounds fascinating," she said.

"I'll tell you what," I said, getting around to my chief reason for calling. "After I get through putting in a hard day, why don't you meet me for dinner? Maybe I can even give you a—"

"Just a minute—Milo," she interrupted. "I've got another call coming in."

It didn't sound like a brush-off so I waited. After a bit she came back on the wire.

"I'm sorry," she said. "Now what were you saying?"

"You know damn well what I was saying, honey," I said.

She laughed again. "I'll be glad to have dinner with you, Milo. Where and when?"

"I'm not sure where I'll be," I said, "so let's make it about seven-thirty. Wherever you say. It's your own."

"How about the Cassandra Club?" she said. "It's on Wilson Boulevard."

"Fine. The Cassandra Club it is. At seven-thirty. I'll see you then, honey."

I hung up and decided it was time to get ready. I opened my suitcase and took out the shoulder holster and a snub-nosed .32. I buckled on the holster, slipped the gun into it, and put on my coat. It fitted the way it was supposed to.

I took the bottle of brandy, a glass, and a pitcher of water into the living room. There was a small radio beside the big chair. I got a disk jockey show and sprawled out in the chair. March was working.

The disk jockey was doing an all-Ellington show and the brandy was old, so I enjoyed myself.

It was after eleven when the knock finally came on the door. I switched off

the radio, transferred the glass to my left hand, and went to the door. I opened it.

He was a natty little thing. Young, maybe no more than twenty-two or three. He was wearing an expensive suit, maybe cut a little too fancy and with too much padding in the shoulders. It made him look bigger than the five-six he probably was. Until you looked close at the padding. His face was kind of pretty, if you liked the type.

He was smoking a long expensive cigarette and he talked around it. Not that he was wasting any words.

"Milo March?" he asked.

I nodded.

He crowded into the apartment past me.

I shut the door and we looked at each other.

"It's your visit," I said. "Care to tell me who you are, or should I start guessing?"

"Rudy Cioppa," he said. He didn't expect me to recognize it and he didn't care. "Johnny wants to see you."

I PLAYED it straight. Just like I didn't know. "Johnny?" I asked brightly. "I don't think I know any Johnnies. Or was I too drunk to remember?"

He wasn't amused. "Johnny Doll."

I thought it over. "Never heard of him," I said, but it wasn't a very good reading.

"Don't be funny. Johnny Doll wants to see you. Now."

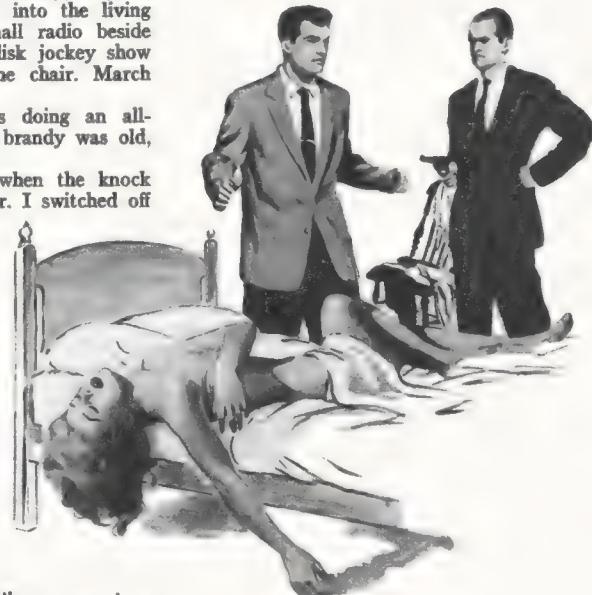
"How's he want me—standing up or stretched out?"

"He doesn't care. Take your pick."

"That seems fair," I said. I wasn't feeling as bright as I sounded. "I think I'll go standing up."

He was looking at the left side of my coat. At the spot just over the shoulder holster. "You loaded?" he asked.

I flipped my coat enough for him to



"Hold it," he said, pointing a gun at me.

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see the leather. His eyes flickered.

"I'll take it," he said.

I could feel my stomach muscles bunching and I was glad I'd had the brandy. I shook my head.

"I'll keep it," I said. "I'm used to it. I might get lopsided if I didn't have it."

He thought it over. He couldn't find a challenge in it anywhere and it was the kind of thinking he understood. Finally he nodded. My stomach went partway back to normal.

"Okay," he said. He motioned toward the door. "Let's go. But make it easy on yourself."

And that's the way we went. As a matter of fact, I wanted to see Johnny Doll as much as he wanted to see me. I had known that there'd be somebody around from Johnny Doll or Jan Lomer.

We took my car. Someone driving his car followed us. We braked to a stop in front of a swanky haberdashery store. I turned off the motor and looked at him.

"Out," he said.

"You mean Johnny Doll's in the store?" I asked.

"Yeah. He's got an office in the back."

WE entered the store. It looked like any other high-priced men's store, but the clerk back of the counter didn't look like any clerk. Although he was twice the size of Rudy Cioppa, he still looked like his twin.

"Manny discourages customers when we ain't in the mood," Rudy said. "That's the door straight ahead."

I could see where Manny could discourage customers, so I dropped the questions and kept on going. Just as I reached the door, Rudy slipped around ahead of me. He palmed open the door and moved inside without ever losing sight of me. The boy was good.

"Here he is, Johnny," he said over his shoulder. He motioned me in. "He's got iron on him. He didn't want to shed it, so I humored him. Want me to unload him now?"

The man at the desk looked up. He was easy to recognize. Johnny Doll had had a lot of publicity, most of it naming him as one of the top fifteen or twenty racket boys in the country. He was medium height, heavyset. He was about forty. His face was swarthy and petulant.

"It's okay, Rudy," he said. He gave me a grin. "Glad to see you, March. I've heard a lot about you."

"It seems to me I've run into your name once or twice, too," I said.

He liked it enough to broaden his grin.

"Yeah, I've been around," he said. You could see he was proud of it. "I hear you're going to clean up Aragon City, March."

"Where'd you hear that?"

"You know how it is," he said with a careless wave of his hand. "I hear things here and there. I even know you arrived here a day earlier than the Civic Betterment Committee thinks you did. Why was that?"

"I like to get the lay of the land before I report," I said.

"Okay," he said. "What are you going

to do about our Aragon City, March?"

"Not much," I admitted. "I'm hired to uncover the politician in Aragon City who's been taking a little folding money for protection, or whatever it is he's peddling. Beyond him, I'm not interested."

"But what about me?" he asked. Suddenly, he didn't look petulant or humorous. "What about Johnny Doll, huh?"

"I ain't lost anybody named Johnny Doll and I ain't looking for anybody by that name," I said. "I'm after one guy and I don't give a damn who pays him or why."

"Yeah, but maybe you can't get him without stumbling over some other things."

"I know," I said, "it's like walking a tight wire—and a pretty thin one at that. But I'm walking it. I told the committee that's the limit of what I'd do. I've got a short nose and I'm nearsighted as hell."

He was frowning. "Even so, maybe I don't like it. You ever think of that?"

"I've thought of it," I admitted.

We looked at each other some more.

"How much dough do you want?" Johnny Doll suddenly asked.

"No dough," I said. "It would only put me in a higher income bracket. I can't afford it."

He looked me over.

"An honest john, huh," he said. His voice wasn't pinning any medals on me.

"Well, there are other ways. I hear you're a right guy in some ways, so I'll put it to you straight. I want you to lay off Aragon City. I'd even like it if you got out of town. Quick."

"If you've heard so much about me," I said, "then you should have heard that I don't quit on a job."

"Okay. Like I said, there are other ways." He didn't take his eyes off me. "Want to show him one of the ways, Rudy?"

The little guy didn't answer, but he started moving toward me. Slowly. His right hand went into his coat pocket and when he took it out, the light reflected from the metal. Knuckle dusters.

I didn't have any clear idea how to handle it, but I started backing off. Rudy kept coming, no change in his expression. His eyes gave me the creeps.

I felt the wall touch my shoulders and that was that. I waited.

Rudy stopped in front of me and studied my face like it was a wall and he was trying to think of the best place to drive the nail. Then he swung.

I waited until the last possible moment, then slipped to one side. His fist slid past my face and hit the wall. There was the crunching sound of steel and plaster, but part of it was the sound of flesh.

Even then he never changed expression. He just backed away and looked at me. He stripped the steel from his hand and tossed it to the floor. There was blood running down his fingers.

"Okay," he said flatly. "So you're fast on your feet." He moved the fingers of his right hand experimentally. They worked all right. His hands moved slowly up toward his left shoulder.

I got tense again. He was going for his gun and Johnny Doll wasn't saying any-

thing. I was saved by the bell. The phone rang.

"Hold it, Rudy," Johnny Doll said. His voice was thick and I knew I'd guessed right. Rudy Cioppa stayed just the way he was. Johnny picked up the phone and said hello.

Whoever it was did most of the talking. Johnny kept saying "Yeah," mostly as if he didn't like what he was hearing. After about three minutes of this, he banged the receiver back on the hook.

"March," he said, "you ever hear of Jan Lomer?"

"I've heard of him," I said cautiously.

"He wants to see you."

So that was it. Jan Lomer was the other half of the syndicate team in Aragon City.

"Okay," I said. "Where does he live?"

"Out in Crestwood Canyon."

"It's at four-twenty Marisol Drive," Johnny said. He winked at Rudy, but I pretended not to see it. "I guess you're a big boy, so go by yourself. Just one thing, March—remember what I said. I don't like you gunning around in my territory."

"I'll remember," I said seriously.

THE address turned out to be a huge colonial-style house on what could only be called an estate. The lawn was as big as a couple of city blocks and was filled with flower beds.

I left the car in the driveway and went up to the front door.

I manipulated the brass knocker and waited. I pretended to ignore the movement at the peephole. Then there was another wait and the door opened. The man who stood there was big. He was fat too, but he would have still been big if you'd taken all the fat from him. He was wearing an expensive-looking smoking jacket and the face above it was intelligent. He was maybe sixty or



He swung at my throat with the blackjack.

sixty-five, an interesting-looking man.

Even though I'd never seen him, I knew that this was Jan Lomer standing in the doorway.

"Mr. March?" he asked.

"Yeah," I said. "You're Jan Lomer?"

"I am. It was kind of you, Mr. March, to come here to see an old man. Very kind of you."

"Not at all," I said. "At the moment you called to invite me, I was being entertained by Rudy Cioppa. So your invitation wasn't exactly unwelcome."

He laughed.

"Ah, yes," he said, "Rudy is sometimes a bit abrupt as a host. Come in, Mr. March, come in."

I stepped past him into the hallway. I waited until he closed the door and then followed him down the hall and into a study.

Jan Lomer stepped around and sat down at the desk. He motioned me to a huge leather chair in front of the desk. I sat down and got out a cigarette.

He got right to the point.

"You, Mr. March," he said, "have been employed by the Aragon City Civic Betterment Committee. The purpose of the employment is to find the man with whom Johnny Doll and I do business. Correct, sir?"

"Yeah," I said, "and that's all. There's nothing in my contract that says I have to hang Johnny Doll and Jan Lomer up by the heels."

"Excellent. At the same time, sir, you'll appreciate the fact that your investigation might prove—shall we say?—embarrassing to us."

"If you're afraid I'll get in your hair," I said, "why don't we make a deal? You hand me the guy on a platter, my work will be over, and I'll leave."

"I'm afraid not, sir," he said. "Not that I have any sentimental attachment for the man. But it might make it difficult to do business with others. If you are successful in your mission, I foresee no difficulty in making arrangements with someone in the new administration. I'm being frank with you, sir."

"What happens with the new administration is none of my business," I said.

"Mr. March," he said, "I have taken the trouble of looking into your personal history. You have the reputation of always keeping your word. Now, sir, will you give me your word that our enterprises will be left alone?"

"Maybe," I said finally. "First Johnny Doll has some idea of pushing me around. And Rudy Cioppa wants to do the pushing. I don't like it. When I'm being pushed, I'm liable to push back."

"Most understandable, sir. I think I can promise you that you will not be harmed once you've given me your word."

"Okay," I said. "Next question: what are your enterprises?"

"I'll be frank, sir—just between the two of us here. Our enterprises, sir, consist of every bit of gambling in Aragon City and quite a bit of it in other spots."

"That must provide a tidy little income," I said.

"We find it satisfactory," he said. "Then you might say we have a monopoly on the more exotic stimulants.

Marijuana, opium, heroin, morphine, cocaine." He sounded like a hardware wholesaler listing the items he carried.

"We participate in the sex traffic," he added.

"What about murder?" I wanted to know.

He shook his head. "No murder, sir," he said, "unless it's absolutely necessary."

"One more thing, Mr. Lomer. When I get the man you're paying for protection—and I will get him—there's liable to be a payoff man in the net. Maybe I can't do anything about that."

"It had already occurred to me, sir." He stared at me for a minute. "Mr. March, when you're sure you have your man, come to me. Then we will provide a sacrificial lamb to lie down with your lion."

"Fair enough," I said. Actually, the only thing I wanted to be sure about was that they laid off me.

I said good-by and went out to the Cadillac.

I DROVE toward the ocean at a leisurely pace. I had started the conversation with Jan Lomer with the idea of jolting him, but I'd gotten the charge instead. He'd been completely right. Finding the politician who was giving the rackets protection wouldn't mean a thing. They'd find somebody in the new administration who'd provide the same service for the same price.

I could get the man who was providing protection for the syndicate and shut my eyes to the rest of the mess, or I could try to clean up the whole town and find myself leading a slow-marching parade to the nearest cemetery.

To hell with it. I pulled the Cadillac into the curb and went into a drugstore. I leafed through the phone book until I found the address of the old lady, Elizabeth Saxon. I got back in the Cadillac and headed for it.

I knew the town. I'd made a sort of peace with the syndicate so there wouldn't be a lot of hoods breathing down the back of my neck every time I took a step. The other half of the team—the crooked cops and the crooked politicians—were worried. I had figured they were the ones who'd sent the call girl the night before. The syndicate boys would never send a girl to do a hood's work.

I parked in front of the old lady's address.

The door was opened by a butler, who must have been all of eighty. He showed me into a room that was like taking a time machine back to the last century.

When she came into the room, she was dressed so that she seemed a part of it. The only things out of place there were me and the twinkle in her eye.

"What can I do for you, Mr. March?" she asked.

"I don't know," I said honestly. "I'm just floating around, picking up what I can." I got out a cigarette and looked at her. She nodded and I lit it. "How did this Civic Betterment Committee get started?"

"I started it," she said promptly. "I gave the rest of them the choice of coming along or having me clean up the

town by myself. They couldn't say no."

"What can you tell me about the Committee?" I asked.

"I've known most of them since they were children," she said. "Linn Willis prides himself on being a self-made man. He's an honest man who is a little bit afraid to tamper with things because in some way it might hurt him. But he likes his money and power enough to buckle down when it's a pinch. George Stern would like to go into politics, so he's trying not to offend anyone but he'd like some publicity. Donald Reid is a pious old idiot. He'll do what he's told and that's all. Sherman Marshall is an old windbag. Dr. Jilton is on the Committee because he likes to keep in with the best people."

"And Miss Russell?"

The old lady snorted. "She's decoration," she said.

"The guy in charge of the protection could be anybody," I said. "He might be the mayor or a street cleaner or somebody who shows no interest in politics."

We talked some more and then I left. I drove straight downtown and found the District Attorney's office. His name was Martin Yale. I showed the receptionist the piece of paper that said I worked for him and that got me right in.

He was maybe three or four years older than me. About forty. He had one of those rugged faces that never loses its grimness no matter how much he laughs.

"I'm Milo March," I said.

"I'm glad you're here."

"How far will you back me up?" I asked.

"If you're on the level, March—and I've been made to feel you are—you'll get complete backing as long as I'm District Attorney. Does that answer your question?"

"It does," I said. I stood up. "Keep the bromide handy."

He laughed, which made it a good exit line, so I left.

It was three o'clock. My date with the redhead was for seven-thirty, so I decided to go back to my apartment.

I DROVE out to Miramar Terrace. I parked in front of the house and went upstairs. When I was putting my key in the lock, I heard the phone ringing. I opened the door and went in fast.

I automatically looked around the room as I picked up the phone. Then I had a little trouble answering, but I finally made it.

"Yeah?" I said.

"Hello, darling." It was the Canadian Club voice. "This is Polly East."

"I know," I said.

"I checked up on that business of last night," she said. "We won't mention any names, darling, but I talked to the man who asked me to send Mickie out to see you. I've told him that I won't play any more games like that. I wanted you to know, darling."

"That's nice," I said flatly. I kept looking at the studio bed.

"I explained it to Mickie," she said. "She said she might come out to see you today. Has she been there yet?"

"Yes," I said.

"Good," Polly East said. "Mickie's a

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nice girl."

"Was," I said.

"What?"

"Was a nice girl," I explained carefully. "She's dead."

There was a long pause.

She said a short hard word. I waited out another pause.

"I'm sorry," she said finally. "Mickie was a swell girl—oh, hell, I guess I'd better stop talking."

She hung up.

I put the receiver back, still looking at the bed. She was lying there on the bed. Just like the night before, her clothes were over a chair. But there were a couple of differences. The night before her clothes were draped neatly over the chair. Now they were just bunched on it. And just below one of Mickie Gill's beautiful breasts there was a small blue-black hole. There wasn't much blood around it. I wondered why.

I walked over and picked up a handful of her clothes. There was plenty of blood on them. And there was a hole in the white blouse. Somebody had killed her and then taken her clothes off. I decided that the undressing was just an extra piece of nastiness.

I walked over to the bed and looked at her. I leaned over and looked closer at the bullet hole. I prodded at the flesh with a forefinger. She'd been dead a while, but maybe not so long but what the frame would have trouble fitting.

I knew I didn't have much time. There was no point in trying to beat it. But maybe it was time to call on Martin Vale for some of that backing. I moved over to the phone. I figured I had just about enough time to call the D.A.

I was wrong.

I'd locked the door, but this time they had a key. They came in fast without any nonsense about knocking. It was the same two as the night before. They didn't look surprised at the sight of the body on the bed. I didn't expect them to.

"Hold it," the skinny one said. He had a gun in his hand. I let my hand drift away from the phone.

"Well, well, Harry," he said. "Looks like we stumbled onto something."

"Yeah," the paunchy one said. He walked across the room and looked down at the girl. When he looked up at me, I could see he was enjoying himself.

"I'll bet she was hot stuff," he said. "Why did you cool her?"

"It wasn't that," I said tightly. "She looked out the window and saw you. She thought it was better to commit suicide than ever to have to see such a face again."

"I'm going to like working over you," he said. "You're one of those enamored guys. I like to watch it crack off."

"Better look him over, Harry," the other one said. He was still holding the gun on me. "He's probably got the gun still on him."

The paunchy one patted me all around, moving up to my shoulder. He reached around my left arm and took the gun from my holster. As he brought it out, he lifted it so the barrel raked my jaw.

Then he moved around to the side and made a show of sniffing at the barrel of my gun.

"I guess he cleaned it right away," he said to the other cop.

"It's clean all right," I said. "Also you'll have a hell of a time making the bullet fit that barrel." But I was just talking. I knew all the tricks. If the murder gun was a .32 and they had it—and I was willing to bet it was and they did—then they could easily switch barrels on the two guns.

"Sure," the skinny one said. I remembered his name was Gene Grant. "All right, let's go, March."

They herded me out of the apartment.

THE precinct house looked like dozens of others. It was an old brick building, red-brown in color. A bored-looking desk sergeant looked up as we came in.

"We've got a guest, Joe," Grant said to the desk sergeant. "Book him on an open charge."

"No, you don't," I said quickly. "You've got to charge me."

"What do you know?" Harry Fleming said. "He knows the law and everything."

"We can hold you for questioning for twenty-four hours," Grant said. "That's an open charge. And that's what we're doing."

"I want to make a phone call," I said. "That's my right."

"Sure, sure," Grant said. He exchanged grins with the desk sergeant. "You'll get your rights. Just relax while you're being booked."

The desk sergeant picked up a pen and looked at me. "Name?" he asked.

"Milo March."

He wrote it down. "Address?"

"Sixty-two Miramar Terrace."

"That's a temporary address," Grant said quickly. "He's a transient."

"Age?"

"Thirty-seven."

"Okay," the desk sergeant said. "Empty your pockets."

I piled the stuff up on his desk.

Grant tossed my gun on the desk beside the stuff.

"Here's his gun," he said. "Put it with the rest of the stuff. We'll send it over to ballistics later."

Harry Fleming was pawing through my stuff. He waved a slip of paper.

"What do you know?" he said in mock wonderment. "He's an investigator for the D.A. Practically a cop himself."

The desk sergeant listed all the stuff. Then he gave me a receipt.

"The captain in?" Grant asked the desk sergeant.

"Yeah."

"Okay, March," Grant said. "Let's go."

We went down the hall and stopped in front of a door. Grant opened the door and we went in. A big beefy guy, with a red face, was sitting at a desk. He was a uniform. He was a captain.

"Captain," Grant said, aping politeness. "this is Milo March. This is Captain Sam Logan, Mr. March."

"Milo March," the captain said slowly. He was acting too.

"I want to make a phone call," I said.

"Well," the captain said, "the law

says we have to either let you make a phone call or that we have to make it for you. You just tell Harry Fleming who you want called and he'll do it for you."

I knew it wasn't any use. "Okay," I said. "Forget it."

"You see, boys," the captain said, "he trusts us. He's got the right attitude. Now, what has Mr. March done?"

"Murder," Grant said.

You could see it wasn't any surprise to the captain, although he tried to pretend it was.

"Look," I said, "I know I'm probably old-fashioned, but don't you cops even show any interest in the report your coroner's going to make? Or isn't he going to make any?"

"Oh, the coroner will report all right," the captain said. "But by the time he gets it in, we'll probably have a confession and we can wrap the whole thing up."

"Not from me," I said. "I didn't kill the girl, but I had a chance to look at her a little before your two fly-cops came bouncing in. I know enough about it to know she hadn't been dead for more than two hours. I'm covered for those two hours. Well covered."

"An alibi?" the captain said. "We'll have to discuss it."

"Okay," I said. "Bring on your lumps."

"You got us all wrong, March," the captain said. "We don't do things like that in Aragon City. No rough stuff."

The captain got up from the desk. "Okay, let's go."

"Where?" I asked.

"To another precinct," he said. "It gets a little crowded around here and you might like a quieter place. Especially if you're going to tell what you did to that girl after you killed her."

So that was it. Precinct hopping. That way, even if someone found out that they'd pulled me in, no one would be able to find me until they were ready to have me found.

We went out of the station house and got in a police car. A few minutes later we pulled in the back of another precinct. We went inside.

The four of us went into a small room. There was only one tiny window and it was covered with bars. The walls were whitewashed, but they needed a new coat. There were fingerprints all over the walls and a few stains that looked like blood. There were several chairs in the room. There was a flexible light with a big bulb in it.

They shoved me into one of the chairs.

"Let me see," the captain said. "Who'll question him first?"

"Me," Harry Fleming said. Eagerly.

The captain nodded and the paunchy detective came over to stand in front of me. His right hand was in his pocket.

"There ain't no use," he said in that tired voice of his, "in wasting a lot of time talking. We ain't interested in a lot of fancy details. All we want you to do is confess that you killed the dame. Okay?"

I told him what he could go do to himself.

He grinned. "I like them tough," he said. "The tougher they are the bigger the crack when they finally come apart." He wet his lips. Then he brought his

right hand out of his pocket. He was holding what they call a soft blackjack. It was a nice long leather tube filled with sand. I knew the kind. It wouldn't cut any skin or leave any bruises that would last long. But when used by an expert it could give you a headache that would last for days. I had an idea that Harry Fleming was an expert. He reached up and tilted the light more directly into my face. "Look up at me, March."

I looked up at him, squinting my eyes against the light. I tried to look up and still keep my chin tucked in. I didn't quite make it.

He took a short, underhand swing and the blackjack caught me across the Adam's apple.

There was a knife of fire in my throat. I couldn't get my breath. I knew there was air around somewhere, but I just couldn't find it. I flopped around for a minute, then shoved my head down low. I started to come up, really pushing my lungs with the motion. A little air began to trickle in, cooling some of the fire.

HE hit me over the head as I came up. I could feel the flash of pain all the way down to my chin. The pain was bright in the top of my head. Like a Fourth of July pinwheel.

"Those were just easy ones," Fleming said.

After that, he really got down to work. The only sound in the room was the paunchy detective grunting as he swung, the almost silent swish of his arm through the air, the dull thwack of the sap against my head. Once in a while I'd grunt when it hit me although I tried not to.

I was dazed but I saw Grant bring in a strange-looking contraption.

Made out of metal, it looked something like an old-fashioned lantern. There were slits along the sides and the top was completely open. I could see something white inside. A leather thong was looped over the top.

"My own invention," Grant said proudly. He lit a match and thrust it through one of the slits. Flame curled up through the top opening. Then I could see the candle inside.

"Lift your head," Grant said. He slipped the leather thong over my head so that the contraption hung on my chest. It was warm on my chin, but not enough to burn.

"You see," Grant said to me, "as long as you hold your head up like that the candle will keep your chin warm but no more. But you try dropping your head a little and it'll raise a few blisters. Get the idea?"

I got it.

He made the thing complete then. He reached up and swung the light so it was directly in my eyes. I could either hold my head so the light would keep shining in my eyes or I could drop it and get burned. Some choice.

"Now, I'll tell you something, March," Grant said. "All we want from you, March, is a confession telling us how you killed the girl and why. That ain't so much to ask of you."

I decided to try an experiment. I knew the answer already, but I might as well try it. "Okay," I said. "Call in a stenographer and I'll dictate a confession for you."

"Might as well listen to him for a while," the captain said cheerfully. "We don't want to call a stenographer in for nothing."

It went on like that. They weren't really interested in any of the answers I made, so I didn't bother making them. The first half hour wasn't so bad, but then the pains started shooting through my eyeballs and my neck began to feel like a piece of wood that couldn't quite support my head. I could feel a blister forming under my chin. Twice my head had sagged too low before I could whip my neck muscles back into service.

Then the captain said, "You know, March, I think I'm going to tell you something. You won't remember it because I'm going to knock it right out of your head as soon as it gets in. You know who had Polly East send that broad out to see you last night?"

He waited for an answer, but I didn't bother giving him one.

"I did," he said. "I had the boys tail you and then give you just enough time

so they could be sure to catch you . . ."

He reached out and prodded me gently in the chest with the padded night stick.

"That Mickie Gill was quite a dish, so that makes you pretty smart. What kind of a pitch did you give the broad, March?"

I didn't say anything. I looked out at him and waited.

"The broad kicked up a hell of a fuss with Polly," he said. "She let drop the idea that she might do some talking to you. Not that she could tell you anything important. But we don't like broads with long tongues."

He waited again.

"And we don't like smart out-of-town cops," he said.

He started hitting me with a night stick wrapped in a towel.

The padding over the wood kept it from hurting much where it hit. But inside of my head a little ball of fire exploded and the pain sprayed out all over.

Somewhere along the line, I was slumped in a chair trying to sort out the noises around me. There was a distant burring sound I couldn't place. Only after it stopped, did I realize it was a phone.

The captain had picked up the phone. He was scowling.

"Yeah, this is Logan," he was saying. He listened and then he said, "Oh." That was all, but it was a different tone than I'd heard him use before. It sounded like Captain Logan was outranked.

"Okay, okay," he said. He hung up the phone.

"What's up, Sam?" Grant asked. He could read the signs as well as I could.

"Shut up," the captain said savagely. He looked at me and there was hate in his eyes. "Get March out to the car."

This time we took a little longer ride.

We went into another precinct. This time we walked right past the little room in the back, up to the front. I recognized it as the same place they had first brought me. The same desk sergeant was on duty. He seemed to find something amusing about my face.

"So soon?" he asked the captain. "The guy was hinged in the middle after all?"

"Shut up," the captain said. "Give him his stuff."

The desk sergeant looked surprised, but he didn't say anything. He gave me my things.

"Okay, March," the captain said. "Get to hell out of here. We're dropping the charge, but don't let me see you around again."

I made it through the door. Outside, I leaned against the building for a minute.

A man came up the steps, almost running. He went past me, then he stopped. It seemed that his hand touched my arm for a minute.

"March," the man said. "Are you all right?"

The brightness faded from my eyes and I could see his face. It was familiar. It was Yale. Martin Yale. The District Attorney.

"Yeah," I said. "I'm all right."

"Who did it? Logan?"

"Logan," I said. It was a sharp memory, the kind you can taste. It had a bitter taste. I'd remember it for a long time. "Logan and Fleming and Grant."



"What happened to you, Milo?" she asked. Her fingers were soft on my bruised cheek.

CALL GIRL BAIT

"Good God, man," he said. He sounded angry. "I just found out you'd been arrested. I know these guys. I wanted to get you out."

"How'd you know I was arrested?"

"I went over to your apartment about thirty minutes ago," he said. "Your door was unlocked and the place looked like a steam roller had gone through it. I talked to one of your neighbors and they told me about you going away with two men. The description sounded like Grant and Fleming."

"There was a dead girl there," I told him. "Earlier. They killed her. But that was the excuse for dragging me in."

He swore. "What do you want to do?"

"Take me home," I said. "Only don't drive over any rough streets. I bruise easily."

He swore again. But he drove me home without any more talk.

I made it up the stairs and went into my apartment. I drank a glassful of brandy.

After a shower, I sat on the edge of the bed and worked slowly on the rest of the brandy.

After a while I was feeling no pain. I rolled over on the bed and went to sleep. I didn't get up till seven the next night.

I ate some eggs and polished off a bottle of milk.

I got dressed and then I dug some fresh shells out of my suitcase and slipped them into my gun. I went back to the bathroom and stuck a couple of band-aids on my face. A small one on my cheek and a bigger one under my chin. Then I went downstairs and got into the Cadillac.

I wasn't going any place in particular.

I DROVE over to the main part of town and started cruising down Wilson Boulevard. Finally I came to a place that looked about right. It was big. It was fancy. There was a sign that announced the *Cassandra Club*. I parked in the back and went in.

It was bright. There were a lot of tables, mostly full. There was a good orchestra working away at some pretty good music.

I climbed on a stool at the bar and looked for the bartender. One came trotting over.

"Brandy," I said. "The best you've got."

Somebody climbed on the stool next to me, but I didn't look around.

Some perfume drifted along the bar and competed with the brandy fumes. The perfume was familiar.

"Hello, Milo," she said.

I looked around. She was wearing an evening gown. Black instead of red this time. The same plunging neckline. Mink wrap instead of stole. The same careful blonde hair. The movie star, hot one night and a brush-off the next morning. The one I'd started to wonder about.

"Hello," I said.

"What happened to you, Milo?" she asked. She reached out and touched my cheek near the small band-aid. Her fingers were soft and cool.

"I cut myself on a sharp cop," I said.

She laughed lightly. She leaned over and took my face between her hands.

"Poor Milo," she said. "Is that why you're so unfriendly?"

"I'm not unfriendly," I said. "It's just that I'm delicate. If people get too close to me, I bruise." I looked at her and remembered what I wanted to know. "Tell me something, Vega," I said. "I came to Aragon City a day before anyone expected me. I meet you in a saloon. Then I find out you're on the Committee that's hiring me and you don't seem very surprised when I turn out to be the guy they're hiring. So how come we met in that bar?"

"Okay," she said lightly. "It's really simple, Milo. I happened to be at the airport when you came in. I recognized you. I knew you weren't supposed to arrive until the next day so I was curious. I followed you."

"Uh-huh," I said. "How come you recognized me?"

"When the Committee first talked about hiring you, I was curious enough to find out more about you. I found an old magazine with an article about you and there was a picture too. You sounded like another, an exciting person and I wanted to meet you. So I did."

It sounded all right, but there was still something about her that was off key.

"Milo," she said. She leaned forward and put one hand on my arm. "Let's leave and go to my place."

"Look, honey, under the circumstances, you were okay as a one-night stand. But that doesn't mean that we're old friends. It doesn't even mean that I want a return engagement. Now, why don't you run back to your friends and leave me alone with my brandy?"

She told me what I could do with my brandy. I'd never heard her talk like that before and I might have winced but I knew it would hurt. She turned around and started to walk away, walking stiff-legged the way some women do when they're mad. It gave a funny little flounce to her hips.

It was one o'clock in the morning. If I concentrated on only the one thing, I just had time to get drunk before closing time. I made it.

IT WAS a hell of a morning. I knew that even before I was awake. I hurt from my feet right on up. I groaned and put off opening my eyes.

Betty Carr came through the door. She was wearing a green knit dress that made her look like a million dollars—in cash. But what looked even better was the cup of coffee she was carrying in her hand.

"Good morning, Hopalong," she said.

I grinned.

She held out her hand and there were three aspirins in it. I took them. Then she handed me the coffee.

I told her what happened, and she was suitably sympathetic. I said, "How did you get in here? People are starting to walk in and out of my apartment like it was Union Station."

"It was easy for me," she said. "I've been Mr. Willis' secretary for a long time. You remember he owns this building? So all I had to do was pick up a master key from the superintendent of the building.

That was all." She made it sound so easy.

"Why did you do it for a guy who stood you up on his first date?"

"Let's say it's part of my job," she said lightly.

She gave me a smile and took the coffee cup. "Stay right there for a minute. There's more to the Carr cure."

She went into the kitchen. Then I heard her go into the bathroom. When she came back, she was carrying a bottle. It didn't look like a brandy bottle.

"This is alcohol," she said like she was giving a lecture. "But not the kind you're familiar with, Mr. March. This is the kind of alcohol you should have tried in the first place."

She sat on the edge of the bed and splashed the rubbing alcohol over my arms and shoulders. She rubbed vigorously. Later she put some on my face and head. Her hands were firm but tender. Her touch was almost as good as a medicine as the alcohol.

"There," she said when she'd finished.

I got up and took my clothes into the bathroom. I shaved, lingered under the shower, and finally got dressed.

The phone started to ring.

I picked up the phone and said hello. It was Martin Yale. The District Attorney.

"How are you feeling, March?" he wanted to know.

"Better," I said. "What's on your mind?"

"You," he said. "I think you're wrong about not pressing charges. There might be a weak link and that would make it snap."

"No," I said firmly. "There's only one link in this chain that's any good and it's not a weak one. But you can do one thing for me, Yale."

"What's that?"

"I want to know Captain Logan's complete schedule for today," I said, lowering my voice.

"Then after you've gotten it for me, forget I asked you."

"Okay," he said. "Call me back in about an hour. Or I'll call you."

"I'll call," I said and hung up. I went into the kitchen.

I went to work on the bacon and eggs.

Then Betty got ready to leave, but I arranged to meet her that night at the *Cassandra Club*.

I WENT to see Miss Saxon.

"And why did you come to see an old lady?" she asked.

"Because I like the old lady," I said. "Besides I wanted to whisper something in your shell-like ear which you can pass along to the Committee when it meets today."

"So," she said. The old girl was really enjoying herself. "You won't make any reports to the Committee but you want to use me to plant information so you can watch the reactions. Is that it?"

"Partly," I said. "If I get a reaction at all, it'll be a better one if it comes as something I apparently dropped while talking to you. I've discovered the man who is undoubtedly the go-between for the man we want and the ones who do the dirty work."

"Who?" she asked.

"Captain Logan." I thought about it

and added, "But don't tell them his name."

"Sam Logan," she snorted. "I knew him when he used to steal apples from our backyard."

"Well, he's stealing more than apples now," I said. "I'm going to do something—never mind what—that will keep him out of circulation for a few days. Then the man at the top will have to make some new arrangements. Maybe in making them his foot will slip a little."

"And why do you want the Committee to know this?"

"I hope I'm going to make it look as if I didn't have anything to do with it. Then only the Committee will know definitely that I did."

I said good-by and left. Down the street, I stopped in at the corner drug-store and called the D.A.'s office.

"March," he said when he came on, "your friend will be on duty at the seventh precinct—that's where they first took you yesterday—until six o'clock tonight. You understand, of course, that that's his own precinct and he doesn't have to be there every minute."

"I understand," I said. "What are the limits of the seventh precinct?"

"El Jardin Avenue on the north. On the south—"

"That's all I need," I interrupted. "Keep a habecus corpus burning in the window for me. I'll be home late."

I went out and went to a movie.

I saw four feature films and three newsreels. Then I went into a crummy little side-street bar and nibbled on some brandy until it was time to go. Then I walked across town.

The Cadillac was still parked on the side street. I got in and drove back to the main part of town. I found a side street running off Ferrala Street, just two blocks from the precinct, which enabled me to watch the front of the station house.

It was about five after six when I saw him come out of the front of the station house. There was no mistaking that lumbering walk. He was alone.

He turned and walked in the opposite direction, along Ferrala Street. I pulled out and followed him.

I was going to have to do it the hard way, unless I got one good break. I got it.

He turned left at the first intersection. He stopped on the curb and looked both ways. I was still crawling, maybe two hundred feet from him. There was one other car coming from the other direction, but the driver was already signaling a stop. There was no mistaking the blue police uniform and the California law says that pedestrians have the right-of-way at intersections.

He stepped off the curb and started across the street with the air of a man who owned it.

He heard the sudden roar of the motor all right. He looked up. Then he tried to get out of the way. But when it came to pick-up, he wasn't in the same class with the Cadillac.

The left front fender caught him right where his swivel chair usually caressed him. There was a good meaty crunch as it hit and I could feel the jar all the way up through the frame of the car. At the same time he jerked up off the street,



like he was dangling from invisible strings, and flopped through the air. I caught a flash of him trying to dig his way through the pavement, then I was past the intersection.

There was a brief glimpse of the slack-jawed driver in the other car. I hit the next intersection and turned without lifting my foot from the accelerator. The tires screamed, sounding as if they might have been Logan.

I made three more turns like that, then straightened out toward the north. I slowed the car down to the legal thirty-five miles an hour.

I felt good. Maybe it was my imagination, but it seemed that my head didn't hurt so badly.

I drove across El Jardin Street, found a side street, and parked the Cadillac.

A block away there was a bus that ran down Wilson Boulevard. I climbed on the first one that came along. I got off not far from the Cassandra Club.

I walked up and down the side streets for maybe ten or fifteen minutes. There were plenty of small bars around there. I looked in all of them, but finally I found one that looked just right. It was small—and empty. There was a sign that said this was the *Golden Shamrock*.

The bartender looked as if he didn't believe it when I came in. He put aside the magazine like he thought it wasn't worth it and came over.

"Brandy," I said. "The best you've got in the house. A little water."

He nodded and brought a bottle and two glasses.

"You from out of town?" he asked. I nodded. "Denver."

"Yeah." He looked politely interested. "I used to work in Fort Logan. Wish to hell I was back there," he said. "If this keeps up, I will be."

"What's the trouble?" I asked as if I didn't care. "The big club up the street?"

"That's part of it," he said. He didn't look as if he were going to say any more on his own.

"Juice?" I asked.

He looked at me with more interest. "Juice," he said. "This is strictly a cop's town. There ain't a cop in town

that doesn't have his grubby hands out."

"I know how it is," I said sympathetically. "I'm temporarily working out of the D.A.'s office."

He pulled a curtain over his face. "I didn't say nothing," he said flatly.

"I didn't hear anything," I said.

We looked at each other and we both grinned. He poured himself a drink from my bottle.

"What do you want?" he asked. "You want something. I can smell it."

I reached in my pocket and pulled out my money. I took out a hundred-dollar bill and put it on the bar. I stuck the edge of it under the bottle.

"It's like this," I said. "I've been sitting up with a sick cop. I think he's just taken a turn for the worse. I wouldn't want his friends to get the wrong idea. I've been trying to think where it was I spent the afternoon drinking. I think this was the place. I knew it was something with a shamrock in the name."

He looked at me steadily. "What about the sick cop?" he asked.

I grinned. "He was so busy getting sick, he wasn't paying any attention to visitors. Rude. But then cops are like that."

"How come you were down this way?" he asked.

"Looking for my car that was stolen last night," I said. "But I guess I might as well report it now."

He reached out and took the hundred-dollar bill.

"You know," he said without changing his expression, "this is the first time I ever saw a guy drink brandy all afternoon and carry it so well."

"It's experience," I said. I slid down off the stool. I started for the door. "Thanks," I said.

I GOT a cab on Wilson Boulevard and had him drive me to the seventh precinct. The desk sergeant wasn't the same one who'd greeted me the day before. I reported my stolen car.

I walked out and went home. It was almost time for my date. I just had time for a quick shower and a change of clothes. And a short brandy. Then the buzzer sounded.

I opened the door and it was Betty Carr.

"Milo, did you do it?" she asked the minute she was inside.

"Do what?" I asked innocently.

"Somebody ran Captain Logan down with a car this evening and hurt him."

"No!" I said, putting a lot of feeling in it. "How badly was the poor captain hurt?"

"Pretty badly," she said seriously. "Both of his legs were broken. One shoulder dislocated. And he has a lot of cuts and bruises and he's suffering from shock."

"Tcht, tcht," I said. "I must remember to send him flowers."

"You did do it!" she exclaimed. "Mr. Willis thinks you did it too. He was furious."

"Why?"

"He said that kind of thing could ruin the Committee. He was all for calling you before the Committee at once, but Miss Saxon wouldn't let him."

CALL GIRL BAIT

"I gather," I said, "that Miss Saxon told the Committee my theories concerning Captain Logan?"

"Yes."

"Good," I said. "But Mr. Willis should watch his blood pressure. It's liable to boil over on him."

The telephone rang. I walked over and picked up the receiver. It was the District Attorney.

"Did you put Logan in the hospital?" he asked.

"Why, whatever made you think that?" I asked.

"I just learned about your stolen car report," he said. "I don't even care if you answer that question," he added, "but I do want you to answer this one. Can they pin it on you?"

"No," I said. "At least, I'm pretty certain they can't. I don't even think they'll try very hard. Now, I want you to do something else for me."

"What?"

"Put a bug on his phone," I said. "It might make interesting noises."

"As a matter of fact," he said finally, "I've already done it. Ten minutes after he was admitted."

I was surprised. "My boy," I said, "if you ever want to run for president, you got my vote right in your pocket."

He hung up.

Then Betty and I went to the Cassandra Club.

The steak was wonderful. So was everything else—including Betty. We ate dinner slowly, talking about a lot of unimportant things.

But before we could start on the important things a waiter came over to our table. He wanted to know if I were Mr. March. I said I was. He said there was a phone call for me.

I thought about it. Nobody knew that I was at the Cassandra Club. What could I lose by a phone call?

"I'll take it," I told the waiter.

"I'm sorry, sir," he said, "but the call did not come in over the regular number, so I can't bring the phone to your table. We have one phone booth here and that's where the call came."

I heard the crunch and saw him flop in the air.



"Where is it?" I asked, moving back. "Next to the bar, sir," he said. He pointed.

"Okay," I said. I stood up and grinned at Betty. "I'll be right back, honey."

I walked across the floor toward the bar.

I stepped into the booth, without bothering to close the door, and picked up the receiver.

"Yeah?" I said.

"Milo March?" a strange man's voice asked.

"Yeah," I said. "Who's this?"

There was a hesitation. Then he hung up.

I knew then it was a trap. I let the receiver fall, but it was already too late. Something was nudging against my ribs. Something hard.

"Relax, pal," a voice said softly.

I looked around, turning my head slowly. It was Rudy Cioppa, Johnny Doll's pet.

"I'll take the extra weight," he said. He reached over with his left hand and snaked my gun out of its holster. He dropped it in his pocket.

"That was real cute," I said. "Who was your friend?"

"A guy," he said. "He called from one of the tables."

"Cute," I repeated.

"Let's go," he said.

We went through the door and out of the club.

A big sedan was parked in front of the club, its motor running. I recognized the guy behind the wheel. It was the guy from Johnny Doll's store. The one Rudy had called Manny.

We got into the back seat, and Manny started the car.

We drove north through Santa Monica and then began winding up the hills beyond Santa Monica Canyon.

After a while our headlight picked out a car parked beside the street. We swerved in behind it and cut our lights. A figure detached itself from the other car and walked back. It was Johnny Doll.

Doll said, "There's a plane taking off from Los Angeles Airport for Denver in about fifty minutes. The boys can drive you there in forty minutes, maybe less. There's a ticket at the desk for you. It's all paid for."

"What about my luggage?" I asked.

"We'll pack it up and send it to you," he said.

"That's mighty nice of you," I said. "But I'm afraid I'll have to turn it down."

"Okay," Johnny Doll said. His voice had hardened. "He's your meat, Rudy."

He slipped from the front seat and walked back toward the car ahead.

I wedged one shoulder against the side of the car and waited. I knew that this was the showdown and that I wasn't ready for it because I hadn't expected it yet.

Just then another car pulled up and Jan Lomer got out.

"Ah, good evening, Mr. March," he said. "I thought perhaps I'd find you here. I trust that my intrusion is not unwelcome."

"I can't say that it is," I said. "In fact, if you were prettier, I'd kiss you."

He chuckled.

"What's the idea, Lomer?" Rudy Cioppa asked. He tried to sound tough and respectful at the same time. "Johnny ain't going to like this."

"I will tell Johnny myself," Jan Lomer said, "but if you see him first you might tell him that if he's not careful he's going to be out of business. And you, too . . . Mr. March."

"Yes, Mr. Lomer," I said, feeling like half of a new Gallagher and Shean team.

"Would you care to come into my car?"

"I wouldn't mind," I said.

"It was nice knowing you, Rudy," I said. "Would you mind giving me my gun?"

He hesitated, looking at Jan Lomer. But then he took the gun from his pocket and handed it to me.

WE drove to his house and sat down in his den. Lomer said, "Were you to be murdered, Mr. March, it might cause more attention to be focused on us when we can ill afford it. Therefore, we've decided it's better to do business with you."

"Meaning what?" I asked.

He leaned forward. "Mr. March, you told me that you were interested in only one thing in Aragon City—getting the man who sells us protection. Is that correct?"

"It is," I said.

"Then we are prepared to assist you. We will name this man for you—although I imagine you already have a good idea who he is. We will also furnish any amount of evidence necessary for your case, so long as it does not involve any essential member of our organization. In return, you will give me your word that once you have this information, you will report it and leave Aragon City."

I thought it over. "Let's put it this way," I said. "If you turn a man over to me and I'm satisfied that he's the man, then I'll agree."

He looked at me for a minute. "The man," he said, "is Captain Sam Logan, of the Aragon City Police."

"Offhand," I said carefully, "it sounds to me like you're putting a man's shoes on a boy."

"I give you my word, sir," he said, "that Logan is the man we've been paying."

"That I believe. Logan is big all right, but I don't think he's as big as you're selling him. Logan's too easy to see."

He studied me. "Mr. March," he said, "what do you want? The mayor of Aragon City?"

"Could I get him if I'd settle for that?" I asked. I was curious.

"Yes," he said.

"Let me sum it up," I went on. "The way things are stacked, I'd better finish this job up quick. And I have a choice between Captain Logan and the mayor of Aragon City. Is that it?"

"Succinctly put, sir," he said.

"Well," I said, standing up, "I'd like to think about it overnight. All right?"

"My man is waiting outside in the car," Jan Lomer said. "He will take you anywhere you want to go."

"Thanks," I said. "I'll call you tomorrow."

I went out of the house and climbed into his limousine. I told the driver to take me home.

THE next morning I went over to the precinct and picked up the Cadillac. Then I drove downtown and went to the D.A.'s office.

When I asked for Yale, the receptionist told me he was tied up but wanted me to wait. She handed me a large Manila envelope.

"Mr. Yale said to give this to you, Mr. March," she said.

I thanked her and went over to a comfortable chair. I opened the envelope and took out some typed sheets of paper. They were transcripts of phone conversations. They bore the date of the day before. I started reading.

*Conversation between Captain Logan and unidentified man.
Time: 8:15.*

MAN: Sam—don't mention any names.

LOGAN: What do you think I am—a fool?

MAN: Yes.

LOGAN: What the hell do you mean?

MAN: I mean that you've acted like an idiot from the start on this. If you hadn't tried to frame March and if you hadn't beaten him up, you probably wouldn't have had this accident. March wouldn't have even known about you if you'd been content to take orders. The next time you step out of line you're through.

LOGAN: Okay, okay (PAUSE.) It was March then? He was the one who run me down.

MAN: It must have been. We're in trouble. Who's going to handle protection and pick up collections with you in the hospital?

LOGAN: Grant and Fleming can handle the protection all right. Why can't you collect the money?

MAN: That's what March wants, you idiot. The whole reason for getting you out of the way was an attempt to make me pick up the collections.

LOGAN: I never thought of that . . . MAN: If anyone from the syndicate calls you about a collection, stall them until I think of something.

LOGAN: What are you going to do about March?

MAN: He won't cause much more trouble. He wouldn't have caused as much as he did if it hadn't been for you and Doll. We're going to let March be successful.

LOGAN: What? MAN: I've been talking to Lomer about it. We're going to turn someone over to March. Maybe His Honor. He's been getting a pretty share for doing nothing anyway.

LOGAN: Say, that's pretty smart. Who thought of that?

MAN: Not you, certainly.

LOGAN: We'd better not drop official interest in March too quick. He'll know something's up, if we don't even show any interest in him after this.

MAN: Maybe you have something at that. Okay, let your boys question him. But no rough stuff. Remember that.

LOGAN: Sure. I'll just have the boys go over to his place this evening and ask him a few polite questions.

MAN: All right. Tell them they can find March at the Cassandra Club. But no pulling him in for questioning.

LOGAN: Sure. They'll play it smart.

MAN: They better. I'll phone you tomorrow, Sam.

Then I went in to see the D.A. I told him about my session with Lomer.

I told him I wouldn't sell out.

"Okay, so you won't sell," he said with a grin. "Where does that leave us?"

"What are you going to do if I pull some pins?" I asked.

"If you can really pull any pins, I'm going to get me a whole flock of court orders and then sit and wait."

Next I went to see Miss Saxon.

"Young man," she said when she came into the room where I was waiting, "did you run over Sam Logan?"

"Let's put it this way," I said. "I was the first person to know that Captain Logan was the victim of an accident. I'm thinking of starting a campaign to make Aragon City safe for pedestrians. In the meantime, how would you like to give me some help?"

"Doing what?" she wanted to know.

"Last night," I said, "the hospital telephone lines were tapped shortly after Captain Logan was admitted. And later he had a phone call from his boss—the Mr. X we're looking for."

"You found out who it was?" she asked breathlessly.

"Not exactly," I said. "But I think it may work out just as well. What I want you to do is call each member of your Committee and tell them that you've been talking to me. Tell them that I managed to overhear Logan's conversation with his boss and I expect to finish up the case by tomorrow. Then I want you to remember exactly what each of them says. Write it down if necessary."

"You think he'll give himself away?" she asked.

"Maybe not," I said. "But there may be something I can use in the answers.

"But don't get any bright ideas about trying to get more information out of any of them. Even if you're sure. Just do what I told you and then relay it to me. Nothing more."

She nodded eagerly.

The phone rang as soon as I got in.

It was Betty.

"I have the afternoon off," she said, "and I thought we might do something."

I knew I should say no, but I wanted to see her. And there shouldn't be any danger until after Miss Saxon had made the calls, maybe not until after I phoned Lomer. I weakened.

"Come ahead," I said. "I stopped

thinking the minute I heard you speak."

"I'll be right over," she said and hung up.

I finished my coffee and stacked the dishes in the sink. I had just walked back into the living room when the door buzzer sounded.

SHE stood in the doorway, looking at me. There was a softness in her face I had never seen there before. Her green eyes were soft and warm, like a summer ocean.

She came through the door without a word. I closed the door and turned to look at her. She came into my arms with a little rush.

Her lips brushed across mine and it was like turning my lips up to the sun. They brushed again, lightly, then stayed there. I could feel her heart pounding against mine and I couldn't tell which was pounding the louder. Then she suddenly pushed me from her with an almost impatient gesture.

I went over and sat on the edge of the bed and watched.

It was like a dream, a dream that eliminated time and should never stop. She moved, slowly, gracefully, across the room, the jacket slipping from her shoulders. She pulled it around and put it over the back of a chair. There was a whispered assent from a zipper and she stepped out of her skirt. Each button on her blouse surrendered its place slowly, then the yellow silk was draped over the brown suit. Her hands arched along her back and came away holding a wisp of white silk. She stepped out of her pumps and peeled the sheer stockings from each leg.

She turned and looked at me, her eyes shy and proud. The feel of her beauty went through me sharply, like a shout of laughter, almost like pain.

She came across the room, her red hair tumbling over her ivory shoulders. And there was the pounding of the surf, like the pounding of two hearts.

Then we were two again and I lit two cigarettes and gave her one of them.

"I love you," she said sleepily.

"I love you," I answered.

She put her head on my shoulder and we finished our cigarettes in silence.

I looked at her. A tear rolled down her cheek. I leaned over to kiss away the one that followed it.

"What's the matter?" I asked. "Why are you crying?"

"Because I'm happy," she said. "And I'm afraid. I don't want to lose it, Milo."

"We won't lose it, honey," I said. "But I have to finish this job."

"I know you do," she said.

"It won't take long," I said. "I think maybe it'll be finished by tomorrow. Then we'll start living. Just you and me."

She rolled over on her stomach and reached to the small radio at the head of the bed. She found a station with music, turned the volume low. Then she rolled back to look at me.

We sat there quietly, each of us building the dream in our hearts while the radio provided a love song.

The song came to an end and a voice said: "The two o'clock news, brought to you by the Froug Car Company—the

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home of luxury cars at economy prices . . .

The voice went on.

"Now to the news," the announcer said. "Federal narcotics agents today seized a cache of morphine and heroin, estimated at a value of two hundred and fifty thousand dollars, aboard a private yacht as it docked in Aragon City. It is believed the shipment was destined for a local crime syndicate . . . Aragon City firemen, answering an alarm on Third Street, broke into the house and discovered a double murder. Miss Elizabeth Saxon, sixty-eight-year-old native of Aragon City, and her seventy-five-year-old butler had both been shot to death. The time of death was fixed at about one o'clock by the coroner's office. Chief of Police Leo Gibbs has promised an early arrest . . ."

The voice droned on but I didn't hear it. I felt like I'd been sandbagged over the head. I knew what had happened. She'd called the Committee members like I'd told her. And one of them had been more upset by the news than the others. The old lady hadn't been able to resist the temptation of probing a little deeper. I could almost see the expression on her face as she thought of being able to call me and give me a name instead of just reporting conversations. And she had probed too deeply. Someone had convinced her that he would come over to discuss it. Then he'd arrived and the only conversation was in lead.

"Milo," Betty was saying, "I'm sorry . . ."

"Sure, you're sorry," I said harshly. "Everybody will be sorry. They'll probably give her a lovely obit in the newspaper. But she's still dead."

I checked the savagery in my voice and looked at her for the first time since I'd heard the news. Her face was white.

"I'm sorry, honey," I said. "I didn't mean to take it out on you. You'd better get dressed, and go home. Things are going to start happening around here and I don't want you in the line of fire."

She got up and dressed without saying a word.

I kissed her good-by.

Then I called Jan Lomer.

"Ah, good afternoon, sir," he said. "I've been waiting for you to phone."

"A friend of yours," I said evenly, "killed a friend of mine."

There was a long pause. "I'm afraid I don't understand," he said at last. "To the best of my knowledge, my more immediate friends have been completely inactive today."

"Not those friends," I said. "I mean a top man. A big, important man, a credit to his community and all that. He murdered an old lady. An old lady of whom I was becoming very fond."

"I'm sorry to hear that, Mr. March. I mean that, sir. I trust you will not let sentiment interfere with business. This incident is most regrettable, but I'm sure that you and I can work out things."

"Not any more," I said. "I'm not buying and I'm not selling. From now on

there's not going to be any neutral territory. I want to taste a little blood."

"I'm sorry to hear that, sir," he said. "You know what this means?"

"I know," I said.

I hung up and went into the kitchen. I got down the box of crackers and got out the old four-barreled gun. It felt good in the palm of my hand.

I went back into the living room, carrying a bottle of brandy and a glass with me. I sat down. I got a small can of oil from my suitcase and cleaned the gun carefully. Then I loaded it. I got out a special clip, a variation of the sort of spring clip which magicians use. It had been made to hold the small gun. I put the gun in it and fastened it to the inside bottom of my coat.

I stood up and pressed my arm flatly against the side of my coat. The gun dropped into my fingers where they waited just below the edge of the coat. I tried it a few more times. Then I sat down to wait. I was as ready as I'd ever be.

They moved fast. I had to say that for them. It was maybe no more than twenty minutes later when the door buzzer sounded.

I went to the door and opened it.

Harry Fleming stood there. There was a gun in his hand.

"This is it, sucker," he said. "Turn around." He gestured with the gun.

I turned around. He reached under my left arm and snaked my gun from its holster. He patted my pockets carefully.

"Okay," he said. "Turn back now."

I turned back. As I faced him, he slapped me across the cheek with the barrel of the gun. I felt the gun sight take a little skin with it. Some blood ran warmly down my jaw. But there was no pain in it.

"What is this?" I asked evenly. "An arrest?"

"Call it that if you like," he said. "Call it anything you want to. Come on."

There was a sedan parked in front of the house. Fleming pushed me across the sidewalk and opened the back door. We got in. When we were inside I saw the driver was Rudy Cioppa.

As we went around the corner, I got a glimpse of an MG pulling away from across the street. I could see the red hair blowing in the wind. She'd hung around and then had seen me taken out. I cursed under my breath and hoped that she wasn't going to try to bring in the man-rienes.

We headed toward the ocean. We came to a stop in front of a huge building down on the ocean front. It had once been a fancy beach club, but now it was empty and weather-beaten.

We went into the building and the door clicked shut behind us.

Inside, there was nothing of the club look left. It was like being in any old warehouse.

We went up a winding staircase to the second floor.

We turned into one of the rooms and it was fixed up with chairs and a desk.

There was a man sitting at the desk. He looked up as we came in, staring at me.

It was Johnny Doll.

"You're all through, March," he said.

"They finally got around to listening to me. Let's get it over with."

Rudy Cioppa and Harry Fleming left my side and moved toward the desk. Then they turned to face me. Harry Fleming still had his gun in his hand. I felt a little naked standing there in the strong light while the three of them looked at me as if I were already dead.

"Me?" Harry Fleming asked. His voice was unsteady.

"Why not?" Johnny Doll said.

Harry Fleming cursed and started to raise his gun. I pressed my arm against my side and felt the little gun drop into my hand. It felt good.

I almost laughed when the first bullet hit Harry Fleming. He was still raising his gun when it hit him.

I saw it all, but like a picture that's flashed before your eyes and then off. For I knew there was no time to enjoy it. Rudy Cioppa was already getting his gun out of his shoulder holster. There was no time for careful aiming. I just pointed the gun and pulled the trigger. I didn't even wait to see what happened, but swung back toward the desk. Johnny Doll was trying to go down behind the desk and get a gun out at the same time. He was trying to do too many things. I heard the third bullet hit and saw the first dark rush of the blood on his white shirt before he flopped out of sight.

THERE was another shot and I looked down to see if I'd pulled the trigger again. I hadn't. Like a delayed signal, I felt the tug at my coat, the burn along my ribs after it had happened.

Rudy Cioppa was lying on the floor, the same set, dead expression on his face. He was propping his right hand up with his left, steadying the gun in it. A trickle of smoke came from the muzzle.

I leveled the small gun, but it wasn't necessary. Even as I tightened my finger, Rudy dropped his gun and slumped back.

The warehouse was quiet. Deadly quiet.

"Stand still, March," a voice said behind me. It was a voice filled with anger and hatred.

I stood still. There was a spot in my back that itched, like that was where a gun was pointing.

"Now turn around," the voice said. "Slowly."

I turned. Very slowly.

A man stood in the doorway behind me. He held a gun in his hand. We stared at each other.

It was Linn Willis. The Chairman of the Aragon City Civic Betterment Committee. Owner of the Willis Aircraft Corporation. Owner of the Aragon City News.

"I had to come to see you die," he said. "It's better this way. I'll like it better. I'll kill you myself."

"Like you did Miss Saxon?" I asked softly.

"Yes," he said. "Yes, like I did her. It was easy. And it'll be easier with you. She was an old fool. I was against your being hired, but she had to have her way. And now look what you've done."

"I've been busy," I admitted. I was watching him closely. I knew he wasn't

going to talk long. He had to move fast.

He walked closer and I could see the whiteness of his knuckle over the trigger of the gun. I saw it start to whiten more and I shot through my pocket.

The bullet hit with a soft thud and I heard the breath hit in his throat. I reached out with my left hand and slapped the gun from his slack fingers.

He stood there for a minute, swaying only slightly. Then, like a man riding down an escalator, he slid below the level of my eyes, then folded to the floor.

I stood looking down at him.

"That," I said, "was more for Miss Saxon than for all the other things you did. I hope she's watching somewhere and knows that it's partly squared off now."

I don't think he heard me. His mouth was working as though he was trying to say something. There was death in his eyes, but that hatred was still keeping him alive.

"You—rat," he finally said. The words made the blood bubble between his lips. "You have to take everything from me, don't you? You have to have—everything—everybody—even—"

He died.

I should have felt very good, but I didn't. I felt lousy.

I walked down the winding stairway and across the warehouse floor. I pushed open that front door and stepped out into the sun. I heard a car drive away from the front of the building, but I didn't even bother to look up.

After a while I closed the door behind me. I walked down the street until I came to a cab stand. Then I took a cab back to Miramar Terrace. I didn't bother going up to the apartment. I climbed into the Cadillac and drove back across town. I stopped at the first drugstore and went in. I entered a phone booth and dialed the D.A.'s number. I told all.

"That's about it," I said. "You already know where to find Captain Logan. The rest of it's on your little list. With Willis and Johnny Doll out of the way, the rest of them will fold fast."

"Uh-huh," he said. "What about Lomer?"

"I don't think you can get much on him," I said, "but I don't believe he'll bother you. The rest of it's up to you, Yale. I've planted your hangman's garden, but it's your harvest. You can do me one favor."

"What's that?" he asked.

"When you get around to it," I said, "call someone on what's left of the Civic Betterment Committee and tell them their chestnut is out of the fire. Tell them they can mail me my check to Denver."

I hung up and went out to the car. I got in and drove over to Jan Lomer's.

"Well, Mr. March," he said, "I didn't expect to see you here."

"I know," I said. "I owe you something, Lomer. I came to pay it to you. You've earned yourself a nice long vacation. Take it."

"They failed, eh?" he said. "All three of them?"

"Yeah," I said. "All three of them and one more."

He looked at me with those old shrewd eyes. "Willis?" he asked finally.

"Willis," I said. "Aragon City ain't what it used to be. Right now, the D.A. is busy grabbing bank accounts and safety deposit boxes. But sooner or later he'll get around to you."

He nodded. "Why are you taking the trouble to warn me, sir?" he asked.

"I told you," I said. "I owe you for the other night when Rudy grabbed me before I was ready. Besides, what's the difference? You're an old man and you're through operating in America."

He just looked at me.

I left then and drove to Miramar Terrace.

SHE was already in the apartment when I got there. Without a word, she came across the room and into my arms. I held her there for a moment, feeling the warmth of her body through my clothes, the scent of her filling my head with memories. Then I pushed her from me.

"I killed Linn Willis," I said.

"I guessed it," she said.

"He hated me," I said. "It was a special hate. And it was greater when he knew I'd killed him. He accused me of having to have everything and everybody. I thought about that as I walked down the stairs."

She said nothing.

"I've seen men before who hated me for destroying their dream world," I said. "But this was different. This was the hatred of a man for another man who's taken his woman. . . . I came out of the building and someone drove away while the sun was in my eyes."

"You turned your eyes to the sun," she said.

"I know," I said. "Sometimes a man doesn't dare look at something he knows. I was remembering. Remembering the first time I asked you for a date and you said there was a call coming in on another line, then you came back and said you'd meet me. Remembering that there was no switchboard in the office, that there was only one phone."

She nodded.

"Remembering," I went on, "that the other night Linn Willis knew I was going to be at the Cassandra Club before I even got there—before I knew it myself. He knew I was going to be taken there. And he passed it along to Rudy Cioppa."

"I wanted to tell you," she said, "but I couldn't until it was straightened out. Then I went to him and told him that I loved you and asked him to let you go."

"So that's why he hated me so much," I said. "I could almost hate you for that myself. . . . You had to make your report complete, didn't you?"

"No," she said and her voice was a thin cry. "No, Milo. I was trying to save you and make it a clean break."

"You reported everything," I said. It hurt and I wanted to hurt back. "Did you also report this afternoon? Did you tell him how you kept me occupied while he was killing an old woman?"

"Don't, Milo," she said. "I love you."

"My voice sounded far away." "I'd always remember that you came to me because he wanted you to. That he was willing for you to come to me as long as



I felt the gun sight rake my skin.

you didn't like it. I'd always remember that something made you go to a guy like that in the first place."

She looked at me and the life went out of her eyes.

"All right, Milo," she said. "I had this afternoon and you can't take that away from me. I love you and that's still mine, too. I'm ready whenever you are."

"Ready for what?" I asked.

"Aren't you going to take me in?" she asked. "His money—the money he made from drugs, from slot machines, from prostitutes—paid for these clothes. I have more of that money in the bank. Aren't you going to arrest me?"

"No," I said. "I can't do that either, Betty. I can't go in and lay my heart on the D.A.'s desk and say, 'Here, put it in jail.' It's not that easy, Betty . . . It's got to go the way it is. This, right here and now, is your punishment—and mine too. It's remembering this day—all of it, from twelve o'clock right up to now. Never forgetting any part of it."

I turned and walked through the door without looking back.

Downstairs I got in the Cadillac. I drove out to the International Airport. I left the Cadillac sitting in the parking lot and went inside. There was a seat on a plane leaving for Denver in five minutes. I bought a ticket and went out and boarded the plane.

When we were up over the city, I looked down and saw the lights. Somewhere among them was something called Aragon City. I looked down and tried to imagine that those tiny lights were all there was down there. But it didn't work. I could still remember.

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